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January 2012

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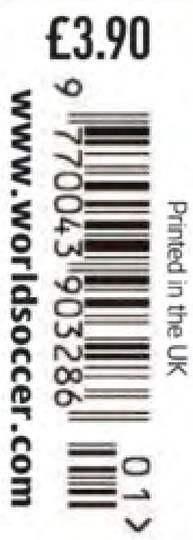
Football's most influential figures

THE NEXT GENERATION

Youngsters to watch in 2012



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PLUS

- EUROPE'S BEST GOALKEEPERS
- ARGENTINA 1986
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EURO 2012

Our countdown starts here

2011 World Player of the Year

MESSI

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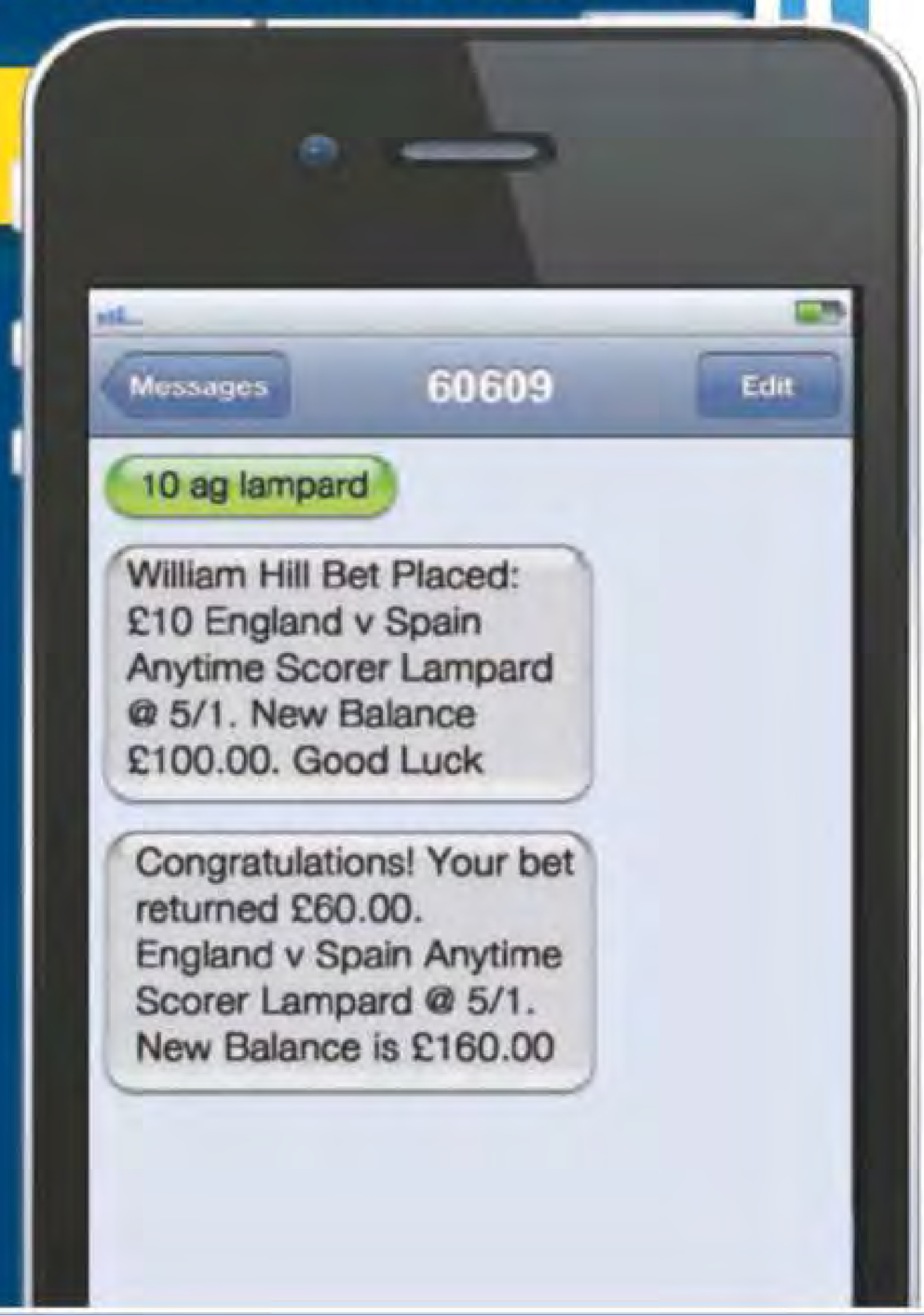

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January 2012

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In Pictures

The global game caught on camera

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BRAZIL...Corinthians and Palmeiras players observe a minute's silence following the death of Brazil's 1982 World Cup captain Socrates

CZECH REPUBLIC... Milan defenders look on as Viktoria Plzen's Marek Bakos has a free header in their Champions League clash in Prague

SERBIA...Red Star Belgrade fans light flares during their derby match against city rivals Partizan

GERMANY...Holland striker Klaas-Jan Huntelaar prepares to do battle against Germany in a friendly in Hamburg

ARGENTINA...Boca Juniors celebrate their title win on a crossbar at their Bombonera Stadium in Buenos Aires

ENGLAND...Norwich City defenders look back in anguish as Sergio Aguero scores Manchester City's first goal in a 5-1 win

INDONESIA...a fan covers himself in talc while watching Indonesia play Vietnam in the South East Asian Games in Jakarta

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PICTURES OF THE MONTH QR CODE

To see more of the best photos from the month, scan the QR code using any free QR reader that can be downloaded to your smartphone. You can also see the images by logging on to bit.ly/v1e4ZC

FROM THE EDITOR

Congratulations to Lionel Messi, *World Soccer*'s 2011 World Player of the Year. Messi was the overwhelming choice in our 30th annual poll. We have run out of superlatives to describe Messi, such has been his brilliance over the past 12 months. Hopefully, Joel Richards' profile (page 54) gives a fresh view on Messi from an Argentinian perspective.

The past month has been an eventful one, from the shock deaths of Socrates and Gary Speed to the Euro 2012 draw in Kiev and the fallout from the ISL scandal at FIFA. That's off the pitch; on it, league titles have been decided in Argentina, Brazil, Japan and the USA

Joao Havelange's resignation from the IOC is a huge story, one to which we will inevitably return in the coming months. Indeed, there may well have been further developments by the time you read this.

We have run out of superlatives to describe Lionel Messi, such has been his brilliance over the past 12 months

We have a new feature this month, dotted through the magazine. QR codes (explained below right) are a new device that allow you to access extra content via your smartphone, free of charge.

Gavin Hamilton, Editor

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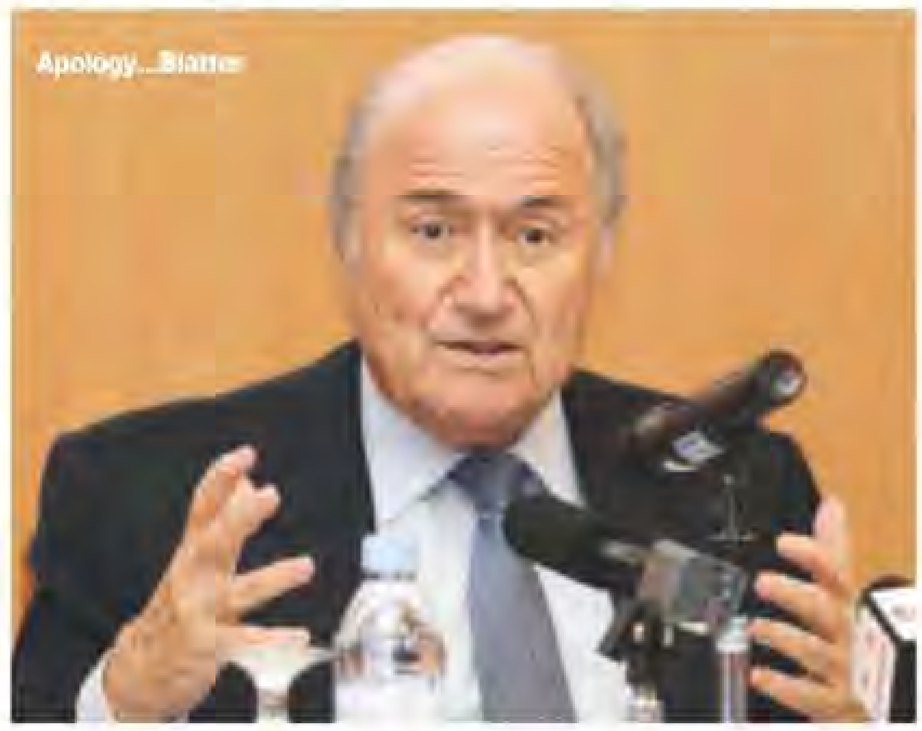
10 SIGNIFICANT EVENTS THIS MONTH

1. Lionel Messi wins *World Soccer*'s 2011 World Player of the Year Award.....pages 9 and 54
2. Joao Havelange steps down from the IOC and avoids ethics investigation into payments from ISL.....pages 47 and 77
3. Sepp Blatter embroiled in racism row.....page 8
4. Euro 2012 draw pits Holland and Germany in same group..... page 22
5. Football shocked by deaths of Socrates and Gary Speed .....pages 10 and 11
6. Ronaldo is invited onto Brazil's 2014 World Cup organising committee by Ricardo Teixeira.....page 75
7. Corinthians win Brazilian championship on final day.....pages 40 and 96
8. Boca Juniors lift Argentina's apertura title.....page 33
9. LA Galaxy win Major League Soccer title for the first time.....page 98
10. Both Manchester clubs, United and City, crash out of the Champions League.....page 93

FIFA

Sepp Blatter forced to apologise in racism row



FIFA president Sepp Blatter was forced to issue a rare apology after making controversial comments in a television interview about tackling racism.

Blatter had suggested in an interview with Al-Jazeera that football has no problem with racism. He said comments are often made in anger during games but then "forgotten" after the final whistle. Officials should "bring two people together and say 'Shake hands'" said Blatter.

Later, when asked in an interview with CNN whether there is still racism on the pitch, Blatter said: "I would deny it. There is no racism. Maybe one of the players has a word or a gesture which is not the correct one, but the one who is affected by that, he should say that 'this is a game'."

After his comments attracted widespread criticism, Blatter responded by publishing a statement on the FIFA website, alongside a picture of himself with the prominent South African politician Tokyo Sexwale. "All my life in football has been accompanied by fighting discrimination and fighting racism," he claimed.

But when Blatter attracted further criticism for admonishing England defender Rio Ferdinand, who had called his comments "laughable", he was forced into a rare apology.

"It hurts and I am still hurting because I couldn't envisage such a reaction," said Blatter.

"When you have done something which was not totally correct. I can only say I am sorry for all those people affected by my declarations."

HOW TO SCAN QR CODES

Throughout this issue you'll see a number of 'QR' codes. These can be read by most smartphones (Iphone, Android and Blackberry devices) and contain a link that will direct you to FREE bonus content. The code on the right will take you to a list of previous award winners. You can download a 'QR' reader from any App Store. Once the reader is installed, simply open the app, aim your phone's camera at the code and you'll be automatically directed to the web pages.

"My father has often been ahead of the game in football, too. He could still make an extraordinary contribution to the club"

Barbara Berlusconi confirms that her papa, Silvio, is thinking of taking up his old position of Milan president again

PAGE 46

THE AWARDS

Lionel Messi is the overwhelming choice of *World Soccer*'s readers as our World Player of the Year. The brilliant Barcelona and Argentina attacker collected more than 60 per cent of the votes cast in our annual poll – a record in the 30-year history of our awards.

It is the second time Messi has topped the *World Soccer* poll. He was the victor in 2009, but lost out to his Barca team-mate Xavi last year. Xavi finished third this time, behind Cristiano Ronaldo of Real Madrid and Portugal.

There were three Barcelona players in the top 10 – Messi, Xavi and Andres Iniesta – while five of the top 10 play their football in Spain's La Liga.

Brazilian starlet Neymar is the only player in the top 10 based outside of Europe. The Santos youngster finished sixth in the World Player poll, but was the clear winner of the Young Player award, ahead of Borussia Dortmund midfielder Mario Gotze, Lille's Belgian attacker Eden Hazard and Barcelona midfielder Thiago Alcantara.

Barcelona pretty well cleaned up, winning the World Team award and with coach Pep Guardiola chosen as World Manager of the Year. Both of these victories were at the expense of Uruguay, whose coach Oscar Tabarez ran Guardiola close in the managerial vote.

Last year's Manager of the Year Jose Mourinho finished a distant fifth in the award, ahead of his successor at both Porto and Chelsea, Andre Villas-Boas, who was sixth. Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson, a three-times winner of the World Manager of the Year award, was third.

Votes were cast from more than 40 countries, including Canada, New Zealand and Turkey, to once again demonstrate the global nature of the *World Soccer* awards.

For more on the winners, see People of 2011, starting on page 46, and Lionel Messi feature on page 54.

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HOW YOU VOTED...

Second time...Messi

World Player of the Year

	% of vote
1 **Lionel Messi** (Barcelona & Argentina)	60.2
2 **Cristiano Ronaldo** (Real Madrid & Portugal)	9.3
3 **Xavi** (Barcelona & Spain)	7.6
4 **Luis Suarez** (Liverpool & Uruguay)	5.6
5 **Andres Iniesta** (Barcelona & Spain)	2.6
6 **Diego Forlan** (Atletico Madrid/Internazionale & Uruguay)	2.5
7 **Neymar** (Santos & Brazil)	2.3
8 **Falcao** (Porto/Atletico Madrid & Colombia)	2.2
9 **Zlatan Ibrahimovic** (Milan & Sweden)	1.8
10 **Robin Van Persie** (Arsenal & Holland)	1.6
Others	4.3

Leader...Guardiola

Manager of the Year

1 **Pep Guardiola** (Barcelona)	33.1
2 **Oscar Tabarez** (Uruguay)	31.4
3 **Alex Ferguson** (Manchester United)	10.6
4 **Jurgen Klopp** (Borussia Dortmund)	4.6
5 **Jose Mourinho** (Real Madrid)	3.3
6 **Andre Villas-Boas** (Porto/Chelsea)	2.6
7 **Roberto Mancini** (Manchester City)	2.5
8 **Giovanni Trapattoni** (Republic of Ireland)	2.4
9 **Joachim Low** (Germany)	1.4
10 **Massimiliano Allegri** (Milan)	0.8
Others	7.3

Champions...Barcelona

Team of the Year

1 **Barcelona**	44.2
2 **Uruguay**	25.3
3 **Porto**	6.6
4 **Santos**	6.1
5 **Borussia Dortmund**	5.2
6 **Napoli**	4.3
7 **Manchester City**	2.1
8 **Manchester United**	1.9
9 **Estonia**	1.7
10 **Lille**	1.2
Others	1.4

Bright future...Neymar

Young Player of the Year

1 **Neymar** (Santos & Brazil)	29.2
2 **Mario Gotze** (Borussia Dortmund & Germany)	26.2
3 **Eden Hazard** (Lille & Belgium)	17.8
4 **Thiago Alcantara** (Barcelona & Spain)	9.1
5 **Paulo Henrique Ganso** (Santos & Brazil)	3.3
6 **Phil Jones** (Manchester United & England)	3.1
7 **Christian Eriksen** (Ajax & Denmark)	2.8
8 **Jack Wilshere** (Arsenal & England)	2.6
9 **Mario Balotelli** (Manchester City & Italy)	2.4
10 **Tom Cleverley** (Manchester United & England)	1.2
Others	2.3

For a list of all *World Soccer*'s previous award winners go to www.worldsoccer.com

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"We played the whole season as Doctor Socrates would have wanted: going out for the win"

Tite (right), coach of Brazilian league champions Corinthians, dedicates the triumph to the memory of the club's late icon

BRAZIL

Socrates 1954-2011: Rebel, leader, man of principle

Three decades ago, Socrates commented that he would like to die on a Sunday when Corinthians won a championship. On December 4 he got his wish, though not perhaps in the manner that he would have hoped. Firstly, because at the age of 57 his parting was sadly premature, and secondly because he is unlikely to have been pleased at the manner in which Corinthians crossed the finish line, with an ugly 0-0 draw against Palmeiras which contained more red cards than clear chances. Socrates always stood for the idea that how you do it is at least as important as what you do.

It was a message he sent out as a player. A giant, bearded man gliding merrily across the field, Socrates clearly enjoyed himself. His reading of the game allowed him to control the play, and his unrivalled use of the backheel was a wonderfully intelligent ploy enabling him to open up the field and gain an advantage over opponents who were more gifted in physical terms.

Socrates was never an athlete in the plenitude of the word, either in terms of biology or of lifestyle. There was something of the gentleman amateur in the man who did not take up the game full time until he had completed his medical studies. But amid the smoking and the excessive drinking, he was a gentleman amateur with a cause.

He grew up with a love of 1960s rebels, and football sharpened his social consciousness by giving him profound contact with team-mates and opponents from backgrounds far less privileged than his own. The football and the politics came together in the early 80s at Corinthians.

At a time when Brazil was still ruled by a military dictatorship, Socrates was the chief instigator in a movement that became known as "Corinthians Democracy". The players, coaching staff and club employees would sit down to vote on all matters of collective interest: which players to sign, whether the squad should be cooped up in a hotel before games, even whether the team bus should stop so some of the players could get out to relieve themselves. It brought success on the field – Corinthians were Sao Paulo state champions in 1982 and 1983, when this title was far more important than it is today – and it also helped educate millions of Brazilians in the virtues and values of democracy.

Many more lessons

The tragedy of Socrates' death is that he still had so many more lessons to put across and opinions to give. It is probably true that after his playing days he never quite found a role suited to his talents. It also seems clear that in his later years alcohol had an effect on his mental faculties. But his was always a voice worth listening to. With Brazil on the move his country will miss his thoughts on which direction should be taken.

Many in Brazil were shocked by the depth of the international response to his passing. "Corinthians Democracy", the outstanding chapter in his life, has been a story for domestic consumption.

Abroad, of course, he is famous for his iconic presence in Brazil's gloriously and unashamedly old-fashioned 1982 World Cup side, which was never fully forgiven at home for their failure to win the trophy, but still loved all over for their style and swagger, even though they did not even make the semi-finals.

Winner...Socrates (no 18) celebrates his goal in a 1-0 win against Spain in the 1986 World Cup

Socrates recalled the scenes in the dressing room after they had been knocked out by Paolo Rossi's Italy. Amid the tears and the chaos, he remembered coach Tele Santana stood as an island of tranquillity. "We gave it our best shot," Santana kept repeating, proud of his players and the way they had performed. They could have gone further, but Santana was wise enough to recognise that they had left some beautiful memories. An early exit did not necessarily make them a failure.

Much the same applies to the life and death of Socrates.

Tim Vickery

"Why so little solidarity from fellow pros? Footballers have to wake up and defend one of their own"

Former France midfielder Vikash Dhorasoo notes the lack of support for Paris Saint-Germain's Peguy Luyindula (right), who was forced to train with the reserves

GOALS we'd like to see again

1 MARAMA VAHIRUA
Monaco v Le Mans
The Tahiti-born former France under-21 plays a bit of keepy-uppy before volleying home from just outside the penalty area.

2 JEREMAIN LENS
PSV Eindhoven v Heracles
Bamboozles defender Antoine Van der Linden with five step-overs before beating him on the outside and firing high into the corner of the net.

3 MESUT OZIL
Germany v Holland
Precision passing at pace from the Germans.

4 LEX IMMERS
Den Haag v Utrecht
A thunderous volley from 25 yards.

5 KEVIN PRINCE-BOATENG
Milan v Barcelona
Fancy footwork followed by a powerful, low shot.

GOALS WE'D LIKE TO SEE AGAIN
Too see video footage of these goals and many more we've selected, scan the QR code using any free QR reader that can be downloaded to your smartphone. You can also see the videos by logging on to bit.ly/vErfRA

OBITUARIES

Gary SPEED (1969-2011)

The Wales national team manager was discovered dead at his home in November after apparently committing suicide, aged 42.

Speed was a versatile left-sided midfielder, strong in the air and with a knack of scoring crucial goals. He played for Leeds United, Everton, Newcastle United, Bolton Wanderers and Sheffield United in a 22-year professional career, and won 85 caps for Wales, making him his country's most-capped outfield player. He also won the 1992 league championship with Leeds as part of a formidable midfield quartet alongside Gary McAllister, David Batty and Gordon Strachan.

Tragic...Speed

Speed was on the losing side in two consecutive FA Cup Finals with Newcastle, in 1998 and 1999, and continued playing until a back injury in November 2008 forced a move into coaching. He briefly replaced Kevin Blackwell as Sheffield United manager three weeks into the 2010-11 season, but when John Toshack was sacked as Wales manager in December 2010, he was appointed Toshack's replacement.

April PHUMO (1941-2011)
The former South Africa coach, who took charge of the side for the 2004 African Nations Cup finals, passed away following a battle with cancer.

Carl Aage PRAEST (1922-2011)
The Denmark winger won a bronze medal at the 1948 Olympic Games in London and two Italian league titles with Juventus.

WINNERS

CHANNEL 5
The English TV station with the rights to show Europa League games can now add Manchester United and City to their portfolio.

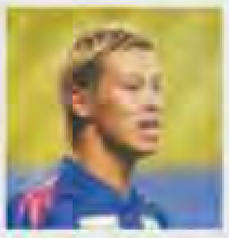
AMERICAN SAMOA
Beat Tonga 2-1 to record their first-ever victory in an official international.

LEBANON
Defeated South Korea 2-1 at home to put themselves on the brink of qualification for the final round of World Cup matches in Asia.

MANCHESTER UNITED
Reached the UEFA Champions League Final last season, but out at the group stage this time.

SOUTH KOREA
The AFC Champions League's most successful nation had its automatic group-stage places for 2012 cut from four to three.

KEISUKE HONDA (right), SHINJI KAGAWA, KOO JA-CHEOL AND YEOM KI-HUN
All nominated for the Asian Player of the Year award, but then ruled ineligible when they could not attend the presentation ceremony in Kuala Lumpur.



LOSERS

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"I am the happiest man in the world right now. We have achieved something which three months ago we had no right to even dream of"

APOEL Nicosia coach Ivan Jovanovic after his team qualified for the UEFA Champions League knockout stage

Questions...Algeria's 1986 squad

ALGERIA

Doping mystery over 1980s World Cup sides

Players from Algeria's 1982 and 1986 World Cup squads are demanding an investigation into alleged doping after it emerged that at least eight national-team players from that period have fathered disabled children.

Former international Djamel Menad told Algerian TV he remembered "yellow pills" being administered as vitamin supplements to the team by a Soviet doctor, Gennady Rogov, who worked with the national side during the 1980s.

Former team doctor Rachid Hanifi, who resigned after being barred access to medical records compiled by Rogov at the time, says he cannot rule out doping, stating: "The link is not clear but it is possible."

Algeria famously beat West Germany 2-1 at the 1982 finals in Spain but missed out on qualifying for the second round after the Germans controversially beat Austria 1-0 – a result that guaranteed both sides progressed.

Algeria also qualified for the 1986 finals and Mohamed Chaib, a member of that squad who has three handicapped daughters, claims: "We now have serious doubts about the effect of the medicines given to us during our preparations for the World Cup. There was a Soviet doctor with the staff and now we are wondering whether we were given supposedly performance-enhancing substances. We want an inquiry. We want the truth."

Mohamed Kaci Said, another with a disabled daughter, adds: "Questions will remain until there has been an inquiry."

Algeria's government had close links with the Soviet Union in the 1980s but Rogov will be unable to give his side. He died in Moscow in 1996, aged 67.

HEROES & VILLAINS

IKER CASILLAS

Passed Andoni Zubizarreta's record when he made his 127th appearance for Spain in a 2-2 draw in Costa Rica.

Landmark...Kapino

STEFANOS KAPINO

After just five games for Panathinaikos, the 17-year-old goalkeeper became Greece's youngest international when he lined up against Romania.

POLAND SUPPORTERS

Protests from fans and the Polish president were strong enough to make the Poland Football Association reverse its decision to remove the traditional white eagle from the national team's shirt badge – as worn for the first time in the friendly against Italy. The eagle has been resplendent on the shirts of Poland's footballers and athletes for many years.

APOEL NICOSIA

The Cypriot club became the first team from the Mediterranean island to qualify for the knockout phase of the Champions League after holding Zenit St Petersburg to a 0-0 draw in Russia.

Marching on...happy APOEL

MANCINI

The Atletico Mineiro and former Roma winger was sentenced to two years and eight months in prison after being found guilty of sexual assault in Italy last year while playing for Milan on loan from city rivals Internazionale.

Jailed...Mancini

VLADIMIR ANTONOV

Resigned as chairman and director of English second-tier club Portsmouth after being arrested and charged with alleged fraud as part of a money-laundering investigation in Lithuania.

Fraud allegations...Antonov

PABLO OSVALDO

Banned by Roma for one match after he punched team-mate Erik Lamela in the dressing room after a 2-0 loss to Udinese.

CAMEROON

National team players went on strike and refused to play in a friendly away to Algeria over unpaid appearance fees for a four-nation tournament in Morocco.

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"They've gone mad"

Johan Cruyff on the announcement that his nemesis Louis Van Gaal is to be hired as a director of Ajax

HOLLAND

Cruyff anger at Van Gaal appointment sparks Ajax meltdown

Unhappy...Cruyff

Civil war has broken out at Ajax following the announcement that Louis Van Gaal is to return to the Amsterdam club as CEO, with Danny Blind as technical director.

The decision infuriated former coach Johan Cruyff, a member of the club's supervisory board that had made the decision without his knowledge. "At first I thought it was a joke," said Cruyff. "But they have set the club on fire."

Edgar Davids, a fellow member of the supervisory board and the man who had informally approached his former mentor Van Gaal, hinted that he had been racially abused by Cruyff, who allegedly told Davids: "You're only on the board because you're black."

Another board member, Marjan Olfers, said that Cruyff made a similar statement about her being female.

As the row escalated, club members were divided into pro- and anti-Cruyff camps, and members of the supervisory board were asked to step down to allow new elections. In the latest move, a Dutch judge has temporarily suspended the appointment of Van Gaal – who remains under contract to Bayern Munich and will not be free to join Ajax until next summer any way – pending shareholder approval.

Although coach Ronald De Boer, who has other things to worry about following the club's Champions League exit, has remained silent, don't expect this matter to go away anytime soon.

Klaas-Jan Droppert

Jim HOLDEN

AT THE HEART OF THE GAME

There's no escaping the fact that Manchester United lack spark and flair

The defeat to Basle underlined the folly of Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson in not acquiring what the Europeans call a number 10: a midfielder of style and guile, and a touch of fantasy to link the play.

There is no getting round this plain fact. Long before the Champions League loss in Switzerland it has been the main topic of debate among those who follow United.

Ferguson knows this. He had a typically tetchy response at the end of November when questioned about it, saying: "Criticism is fine as long as it's balanced. Everyone's saying, 'go out and buy a central midfielder'. Well, I would do that for the right player. If we'd seen a young Bryan Robson or Roy Keane, we'd have been the first there.

"Anderson and Tom Cleverley have been injured, and those two in particular have tremendous potential. They're fantastic young players, so we're missing two very important cogs in the machine."

The United machine has jammed up. You can see that by their drop into the Europa League and with several make-do-and-mend central midfield selections for the team. Wayne Rooney has been pushed back in the search for creativity; the 38-year-old Ryan Giggs was tried against Basle; even teenager Phil Jones has been used – and although he is a great talent, and a certain future captain of England and United in my view, his best position is central defence.

Even if Cleverley had remained fit, would it have made any difference? He has clear potential, but the 20-year-old is far from being an international class playmaker, a rung below the standard of the finest young midfield talents: Christian Eriksen, Mario Gotze, Thiago Alcantara, Jack Wilshere and Xherdan Shaqiri of Basle, the youngster whose crosses created the goals that brought catastrophe to United.

Ferguson knew the problem last summer but declined to pay the £30million transfer fee demanded for Holland star Wesley Sneijder. It was deemed too high for a 27-year-old player – a sensible commercial evaluation, but a debatable football point.

> Ferguson knew the problem last summer but declined to pay £30million for Wesley Sneijder

Not only has it meant an early exit in the Champions League, it has left United vulnerable in a Premier League that is far more competitive at the top this season, and with rivals who all possess more midfield flair.

Manchester City, though knocked out at the same Champions League group stage, have midfield inspiration aplenty with David Silva and Samir Nasri – as seen in the 6-1 victory at Old Trafford.

Luka Modric has excelled for Tottenham Hotspur, who are currently the second best side behind City. He was a transfer target for Chelsea, who instead acquired Juan Mata, who gave a classic performance when Chelsea won their Champions League group with a fine victory against Valencia.

Arsenal are better off, too, with Aaron Ramsey coming of age, and Wilshere to return from injury soon.

Will Ferguson now buy new players in the winter transfer window? For the moment, he says not, but that may be the misinformation managers like to give out.

He is rumoured to be keen on Eriksen, and with Ajax out of the Champions League too, that is a possible purchase. The young Dane is exactly what United need to challenge for the Premier League, or even to stay in the top four and maintain their annual entry to the Champions League.

This is a big moment for Manchester United. Losing to Basle was a profound defeat. There is no hiding that. WS

"It seems Pele took the wrong medication. Instead of taking his bedtime pill, he took his morning pill. He got confused and didn't know what he was talking about"

Diego Maradona responds to Pele's statement that he thought Neymar was a better player than Lionel Messi

REPORTS we couldn't make up

1 Santos' Neymar has been ordered to pay £5,000 in compensation to referee Sandro Meira Ricci after insulting the 37-year-old on Twitter.

The teenager was unhappy with the match official's work after his side's league defeat to Vitoria in 2010 and vented his frustration on the microblogging website.

Neymar tweeted that Santos "are always harmed by referees" and went as far as to call Ricci – who signalled a penalty against the Libertadores Cup-winners during that match – a "thief".

2 Nigerian club Ocean Boys sacked 17 players following an eventful season that saw them escape relegation on the final day.

"Management decided to take the decision because some players were simply not productive enough," a club spokesman said. "How can you explain a situation where a striker will go through an entire season of 38 matches without scoring a single goal. It is just unacceptable."

3 A Spanish league game between Granada and Mallorca was abandoned midway through the second half after a linesman was hit in the face by a faulty umbrella thrown from the stands at Los Carmenes stadium.

The Andalusian side had just taken a 2-1 lead when play was halted with around half an hour left after one of the referee's assistants was struck in the face by an object.

Granada coach Fabri explained that the offending article was part of an umbrella and a boy had accidentally sent it flying at the official, gashing his cheek.

"It was really an act of bad luck in every sense as the poor lad still had the handle in his hand and it seems he lost control of (the rest of the umbrella) without meaning to," explained Fabri.

The remaining minutes were played behind closed doors a week later. Mallorca equalised from a penalty five minutes after the restart (the 65th minute) and the match ended 2-2.

AMERICAN SAMOA

The South Pacific island makes history by winning its first match ...and by fielding a transgender player

Winning smile...Jaiyah and some of her American Samoa team-mates before the historic victory over Tonga

Johnny Saelua stood taller and sung louder than anybody else on the pitch when American Samoa's national anthem was played.

It was seconds before kick-off in a 2014 World Cup Oceania qualification match between American Samoa and Tonga that would make history. After 30 straight defeats – including a world record 31-0 defeat to Australia in 2001 – American Samoa finally tasted victory for the first time, beating Tonga 2-1. And the player of the match was the towering centre-back Saelua. But it wasn't just the result that was historic.

The match was the first in World Cup history to feature a transgender player. Johnny Saelua, who calls herself Jaiyah, is a fa'afafine: a biological male who is considered female and largely accepted in Samoan culture.

"I just go out and play soccer as a soccer player not as a transgender, not as a boy and not as a girl, just as a soccer player," says the 23-year-old dance student who is currently studying performing arts at the University of Hawaii and dreams of touring the world performing ballet. "I hope I can inspire people. Not only the transgender because they are different, but anybody who feels different in their society or community."

Jaiyah started playing football at 11 when the game was introduced to her private school. Three years later she had made her debut for the national team.

"I read somewhere that it was a record when I was drafted in to the national team in 2004," she adds. "I was reserve the whole tournament and I had to leave the tournament because I was still in high school. He [the coach] put me in for 10 minutes and I put myself out there as much as I could."

Jaiyah was included in the squad before Dutch coach Thomas Rongen was appointed, but one of his first acts was to promote Jaiyah to the starting line-up.

In the previous three matches, at the Pacific Games in August, American Samoa let in 18 goals. But in the World Cup qualifiers, Jaiyah was ever present in a defence that conceded just three times. A draw against the Cook Islands set up a winner-takes-all play-off against local rivals Samoa. That proved a bridge too far as Samoa scored a 90th-minute winner.

"I don't know if I have a future in soccer," says Jaiyah, while the machismo of the dressing room, not to mention the game's innate homophobia, would make her emergence as an international footballer impossible anywhere but the pacific. And with few internationals over the next four years, it's unlikely we'll see her in an American Samoa shirt again.

"I want to concentrate on my dance and see where that takes me," she said.

Ballet's gain is football's loss.

James Montague

soccerbooks.com

"I have a nose for goals"

Schalke marksman Klaas-Jan Huntelaar reflects on being forced to wear a mask to protect his recently broken nose

BULGARIA

Prime Minister tops player of the year poll

Bulgarian prime minister Boyko Borisov, an occasional striker who plays in charity matches, topped a poll of supporters commissioned to find the country's player of the year.

Up front...Borisov

Borisov, who is 52 years old, received 42 per cent of the 8,000 votes cast. The poll verdict was interpreted as a vote of no confidence in Bulgarian football by fans who are disillusioned at the poor performances of the national side. Dimitar Berbatov, winner of the award in six of the past seven years, had said it was time somebody else was recognised.

The final decision on the award will be made by a panel of journalists, based on a shortlist drawn from the fans' poll.

Asia's best...Djeparov

In other end-of-the-year awards, Server Djeparov, the Uzbekistan and Al Shabab midfielder, was named AFC Asian Player of the Year for the second time in three years. Iran defender Hadi Aghily finished second.

PLAYER OF THE YEAR AWARDS

BELARUS
Aleksandr Gutor (BATE Borisov)
DENMARK
Christian Eriksen (Ajax, Hol)
ESTONIA
Konstantin Vassiljev (Amkar Perm, Rus)
LITHUANIA
Zydrunas Karcemarskas (Gaziantepspor, Tur)
MALAYSIA
Norshahrul Idlan Talaha (Kelantan)
SINGAPORE
Mislav Karoglan (Singapore Armed Forces)
REPUBLIC OF IRELAND
Overseas – Richard Dunne (Aston Villa, Eng)
Domestic – Eamon Zayed (Derry City)
SWEDEN
Zlatan Ibrahimovic (Milan, Ita)

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Paul GARDNER

THE WORLDWIDE VIEW

Blatter's foot-in-mouth disease strikes again

FIFA president Sepp Blatter has a habit of making extraordinarily ill-informed comments on sensitive issues: his opinions on what sort of kits women players should wear, his advice to homosexuals on just when and where they should have sex, and now his offhand statement about how to deal with racist remarks.

All were followed by apologies, which certainly suggests that Blatter has simply not learned – despite all his years in the public limelight – to think before he speaks. Or at least to recognise which issues call for caution.

Of the examples above, it is possible to read the first two as lame attempts to be humorous, and the third as a wish to take some of the steam out of the racism issue. I do read them that way. It doesn't make them any less offensive, but it does absolve Blatter of any callous intent.

We are almost at the point where we shrug off "another Blatter foot-in-mouth episode", a momentary superficial *lapsus linguae* that can be wiped away with a sincere apology.

What Blatter's lapses show is that he is seriously out of touch with current thinking. Only confusion can result from that

What the lapses do show, however, and what cannot be overlooked, is that Blatter appears to be seriously out of touch with current thinking. Only confusion can result from that. Are we seeing such confusion from Blatter in other areas of the sport?

In a recent interview for US television, Blatter advised MLS to change its April through November season as it does not coincide with the traditional northern hemisphere September-to-May season. Blatter then muddled his way through the reasons why such a change would help the American game.

What he did not do was show any evidence that he understood why the MLS season is played in the summer.

MLS Commissioner Don Garber has already addressed this issue with a lovely facetious put-down: "I'd love to be able to have global warming take effect and have the weather in our country change..."

Has Blatter ever visited New York, Toronto, Montreal, Boston, Chicago or Denver in January? Six key cities where it would be simply impossible to play games from January through March.

Yes, maybe modern technology could do something about that, but MLS is a young league trying to attract spectators, not freeze them to death.

Nor does Blatter evince any understanding that MLS is in direct competition with four other well-established pro sports. With its current schedule, MLS really conflicts only with baseball's regular season games. Switching to the FIFA calendar would bring MLS into direct conflict with the entire gridiron, basketball and hockey seasons – not to mention the biggest event in the American sporting calendar, the gridiron Super Bowl. This is not just a struggle to fill stadiums, it is also a fight for media attention.

Blatter's other reasons for pushing the season-change idea are laughable. He cited as an obstacle to change that has to be overcome the "fact" that MLS teams currently share stadiums with NFL teams. But of 19 MLS teams, only two – Seattle Sounders and New England Revolution – use gridiron stadiums. How out of touch can you get?

Blatter also thinks changing the season will make it easier for MLS to attract top European players. The biggest obstacle in that area is money, not seasonal timing.

A year ago, Garber said it with total clarity: "I don't think we are going to a winter calendar any time soon. To think about playing in Toronto in January or December, it's hard to imagine we are going to be able to do that...I'm not sure if we are ever going to get full alignment with FIFA's international calendar."

The disturbing thing is that Blatter cannot see the reality of the situation and continues to advance his out-of-touch reasons for switching the MLS season. WS

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"My aim is to give soul to this team. I believe in three things: work, work and work"

Delio Rossi on his new challenge as Fiorentina coach

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

Advisor...Courbis

EUROPE

ABDULLAH AVCI, who was in charge of Istanbul BB since 2006 and led Turkey's under-17s to victory at the European Championship in 2005, was appointed coach of the senior national side.

Azerbaijan coach **BERTI VOGTS** extended his contract to cover the 2014 World Cup, despite his side finishing second from bottom in their Euro 2012 qualifying group.

SERSE COSMI replaced Eusebio Di Francesco as coach of Serie A's bottom side Lecce in the wake of their 4-2 defeat at Napoli.

GEORGI KONDRATYEV, who led the Belarus under-21 team to the 2011 Euro semi-finals, replaced Bernd Stange in charge of the national side.

Republic of Ireland manager **GIOVANNI TRAPATTONI** was rewarded for leading his side to the Euro 2012 finals with a two-year contract extention, taking the 72-year-old Italian up to the 2014 World Cup. His assistant, Marco Tardelli, also signed a new deal.

Bayer Leverkusen signed goalkeeper **BERND LENO**, who was on loan from Stuttgart, on a permanent deal after the 19-year-old helped the German club reach the last 16 of the Champions League.

MIROSLAV PELTA, the owner of the country's top-flight club Jablonec, is the new president of the Football Association of the Czech Republic, succeeding Ivan Hasek who stepped down in June.

DAVIDE BALLARDINI was appointed Cagliari's third coach of the season, following in the footsteps of Roberto Donadoni, who was sacked

Third coach...Ballardini

after a friendly in August, and Massimo Ficcadenti, who was dismissed after the Sardinian club had taken just three points from their last five matches in Serie A.

RENE MARSIGLIA was appointed coach of Nice, replacing Eric Roy who became general manager of the Ligue 1 club.

Scottish Premier League side Hibernian appointed **PAT FENLON**, manager of Republic of Ireland club Irish side Bohemians, in place of Colin Calderwood, who was fired in November.

Servette replaced Joao Alves with fellow Portuguese coach **JOAO CARLOS PEREIRA** following their Swiss Cup exit at second -tier club Biel-Bienne.

Kapfenberg, bottom of the Austrian Bundesliga, appointed German coach **THOMAS VON HEESEN** to replace Werner Gregoritsch.

LEON VLEMMINGS took over as coach of AEK Larnaca, replacing fellow Dutchman Ton Caanen after the side's disappointing start to the Cypriot season.

SOUTH AMERICA

LEONARDO MADELON replaced Omar Asad as coach of Argentinian club San Lorenzo.

Gremio signed former Dynamo Kiev forward **KLEBER** from fellow Brazilian club Palmeiras.

CONCACAF

Former South Korea left-back **LEE YOUNG-PYO**, who played in three World Cup finals for his country, joined Vancouver Whitecaps of Major League Soccer. The 34-year-old, who has also played for PSV Eindhoven, Tottenham Hotspur and Borussia Dortmund, left Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal in the summer.

MIGUEL HERRERA resigned as coach of Atlante to replace Alfredo Tena at America after they finished second from bottom of the Mexican apertura. Elsewhere, **JOSE LUIS SANCHEZ SOLA** took over at Atlante, while **WILSON GRANIOLATTI** and **RENE ISIDORO GARCIA** were appointed at Toluca and San Luis respectively. Former New York Red Bulls and Chicago Fire boss **JUAN CARLOS OSORIO** left Colombia club Once Caldas to replace Sergio Bueno at Puebla.

AFRICA

One-time Marseille coach **ROLLAND COURBIS**, who was jailed for transfer irregularities in 2009 after he took bribes to buy and sell players, will act as an advisor to Niger coach Harouna Doula Gabde at the African Nations Cup.

Return...O'Neill

O'Neill back in the Premier League

Former Celtic and Aston Villa manager **MARTIN O'NEILL** returned to the game after a 16-month absence to sign a three-year deal to take charge of Premier League side Sunderland.

O'Neill quit as Villa manager last year after a row with owner Randy Lerner over transfer funds.

"For me it was a 4-0 win. I told my players they were extraordinary"

Just one problem for Napoli coach Walter Mazzarri: his side only drew 0-0 with Lazio

Transfers, sackings and loans

French coach **DIDIER OLLE-NICOLLE** took charge of Algerian league leaders USM Alger.

ABDU MAIKABA replaced Okey Emordi as coach of Nigeria's Enyimba.

ASIA

SAVIO MEDEIRA was promoted to the post of India's national coach, while Serb **ZAVISA MILOSAVLJEVIC** has taken charge of Pakistan.

Argentinian coach **GABRIEL CALDERON** replaced Jorvan Vieira

Bani Yas boss ...Calderon

in charge of UAE Pro League runners-up Bani Yas.

Daegu, who finished 12th in the K-League, appointed Brazilian **MOACIR PEREIRA** as their new coach.

ABDULLAH GHORAD was appointed interim coach of Saudi Arabia's Al Ittihad after Dimitri Davidovic was dismissed following the 1-1 draw with Najran that left them sixth in the league table.

OCEANIA

Uruguayan **JUAN CARLOS BUZZETTI** was reinstated as coach of Fiji, two years after he was dismissed from the job.

EUROPE

ZDZISLAW KRECINA, secretary general of the Polish football association, was dismissed in a spiralling corruption scandal ahead of the country's co-hosting of Euro 2012 with Ukraine. Krecina, along with PZPN president **GRZEGORZ LATO**, was accused by Poland's new sports minister, Joanna Mucha, of possible involvement in a bribery case related to the association's new headquarters.

Turkey cancelled the contract of coach **GUUS HIDDINK** after a 3-0 aggregate defeat by Croatia in the Euro play-offs.

Frenchman **LUIS FERNANDEZ** quit as coach of Israel's national team.

STEVE BRUCE became the first Premier League manager to be sacked this season when Sunderland lost 2-1 at home to bottom of the table Wigan Athletic.

KRUNOSLAV JURCIC was sacked as coach of Dinamo Zagreb within an hour of the Croatian club's 7-1 defeat at home to French side Lyon in the UEFA Champions League.

Argentinian coach **HECTOR CUPER**, who led Valencia to the Champions League Final in 2000 and 2001, parted company with Racing Santander after a 2-1 defeat at Mallorca left the club bottom of La Liga.

Manchester United captain and centre-half **NEMANJA VIDIC** was ruled out for the rest of the season after rupturing a cruciate ligament in the 2-1 Champions League defeat at Basle.

WOLFGANG OVERATH resigned as Cologne president after seven years at the head of the Bundesliga club.

Red Star Belgrade managing director **IVAN ADZIC** resigned in the wake of heavy criticism following the derby defeat to Partizan.

Maccabi Tel-Aviv parted company with coach **MOTTI IWANIR** after the Israeli club won just one of their last 13 matches.

SOUTH AMERICA

Brazil's 2002 World Cup winner **RIVALDO** quit Sao Paulo after falling out with coach Emerson Leao.

Coach **CELSO ROTH** left Brazilian side Gremio after not renewing his contract.

OMAR DE FELIPPE of Olimpo was given his marching orders following an Argentinian apertura loss to Independiente.

Korea coach pays for Lebanon defeat

South Korea sacked national coach **CHO KWANG-RAE** in the wake of their shock defeat to Lebanon in the 2014 World Cup qualifying campaign.

"We are looking for better-suited candidates for the 2014 World Cup both at home and abroad," a KFA spokesman said after the 2-1 away defeat to Lebanon.

The 57-year-old Cho, who was appointed in July 2010, led the team to third place at the Asian Cup at the start of 2011 after winning 80 caps for his country during his playing career.

Despite the defeat in Lebanon, the South Koreans are still top of their World Cup qualifying group, ahead of Lebanon on goal difference, with one round of matches remaining.

Not suited...Cho

Former England captain **TONY ADAMS** quit as coach of Azeri club Gabala.

Former Real Madrid and Spain midfielder **GUTI** had his contract terminated by Turkey's Besiktas after struggling to get into their side this season.

Struggled ...Guti

AFRICA

Nigeria under-23 coach **AUSTIN EGUAVOEN** resigned after his side failed to qualify for the Olympic Games.

ASIA

Former France striker **DAVID TREZEGUET** left Bani Yas after making just two appearances for the UAE side. The 34-year-old 1998 World Cup-winner joined the club in August. However, he struggled with a long-standing thigh injury which kept him on the sidelines.

Two games... Trezeguet

Brian GLANVILLE

THE VOICE OF FOOTBALL

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Weakened...Bayern struggle to stop City's Sergio Aguero

Champions League, a competition tainted by greed and distortion

Is the so-called European Champions League a fraud on football? I ask with what I believe is a plethora of poor evidence. In the final week of the group stage, no fewer than three clubs fielded understrength teams, which in two cases could gravely have affected the outcome of those groups. The third instance was that of Barcelona, whose team of highly promising youngsters was far too good for feeble opposition, who were duly put to the sword.

But before coming down to cases, the bleak truth is that the so-called Champions League itself is a contravention – were it to exist in football – of the Trade Descriptions Act. For the boundless greed of the major clubs has seen to it that far from being a tournament limited to domestic champions, and sometimes holders of the trophy, as many as four different teams can compete in the competition. Meaning that not infrequently the ultimate winner of the tournament is a club which hasn't won its own championship at all.

But back to what happened in those recent fixtures. Barcelona apart, both Arsenal, at Olympiakos, and Bayern Munich, away to Manchester City, put out substantially weakened teams, both packed with reserves. Each, of course, had already qualified for the next stage and therefore had nothing to lose – by stark contrast with teams bound to be affected by the results. Napoli, who had played such splendid football in their group, not least against Manchester City, could well have been overtaken by the Mancunians, who all too predictably beat weakened Bayern, though in the event the Neopolitans won their own game and thus deservedly qualified as, emphatically, the second best team in the group and far too good for City.

> The bleak truth is that the so-called Champions League contravenes the Trade Descriptions Act

In Greece, Arsenal's lopsided selection featured two inadequate goalkeepers. Substitute Vito Mannone, poor fellow so seldom used, had a disastrous evening, making farcical errors as the full-strength Olympiakos duly won. That could have been the end for Marseille, who rallied superbly

to win their own game and thus survive.

So what can be done about it? At the moment, given the half-baked structure of the competition, nothing. No use insisting that clubs may not put out weaker teams. They can simply reply, how can you define a weakened team – however obvious it may be to the naked eye – when every member of the side we fielded was listed on our European champions roster?

The obvious thing to do, though again I do not see it happening, would be to return to the old, straightforward, knockout home-and-away ties which originally prevailed in the competition. There are horrid memories of what happened when UEFA, in its deep wisdom, imposed not just one but two group stages on the tournament, which meant that there was double the chance of qualified teams freewheeling. Indeed there was one shabby instance when a Russian team was caught out being bribed to lose their ultimate game.

But money not only talks, it shrieks aloud and we are plainly doomed to put up with a competition wholly prone to unfairness, distortion and implicit gamesmanship.

At last, but far too late, good news from FIFA

There is, alas, a very long way to go before FIFA falls apart, Sepp Blatter disappears into the sunset and football at last becomes, at international level, a better, cleaner place.

There has been various good news. At last, and far too late, the ineffable Joao Havelange has been obliged to resign from the International Olympic Committee as a consequence of belated revelations of his multimillion dollar pay-off from ISL, a company which eventually, as we know, disintegrated. Some quirk of Swiss law prevented the scam being made public, but now, with apparently the approval of Blatter, himself once the protégé of Havelange, the ordure has hit the fan and Havelange has beaten the posse to it. Not that he in his extreme dotage will be very worried about that.

He has, as we know too well, pocketed millions in his scandalous regime as FIFA president between 1974 and 1998; an all too potent vindication of the words of the 18th-century philosopher Edmund Burke that "for evil to triumph it is enough for good men to do nothing". And nothing was what they did in all those long years.

Blame Havelange we must and do, but what of all those associations and federations, not least our own in Britain, which connived by their silence and passivity in his chicanery?

Meeting and greeting...Platini (left) with the Qatar Olympic Committee's secretary general, Saoud Bin Abdulrahman Al Thani

> Some suggest Blazer was protecting his own back but he doesn't seem to have made a very good job of it

Blatter misses the target... again

Typically enough, Blatter has recently been whinging and whining about the FA and its criticisms of him, allegedly provoked by England's loss of the 2018 World Cup. But England hardly lost it; it was all too obvious Russia bought it. Just as Qatar bought the 2022 tournament.

Blatter's track record is abysmal; his correspondence with that rancid operator Jack Warner of Trinidad expresses an almost brotherly love for that wretched manipulator.

But now, wonder of wonders, enter the FBI, reportedly investigating the tangled affairs of Chuck Blazer, recently the general secretary of CONCACAF and ally of Warner until suddenly he broke cover and accused Warner of his involvement with Caribbean bribes to promote Mohamed Bin Hammam's run at the FIFA presidency.

There were those cynics who suggested that Blazer was simply protecting his own back but, if so, he doesn't seem to have made a very good job of it. He is said to have received commission payments amounting to £320,000 which have ended up in the Cayman Islands and in the Bahamas. All clean and above the board, he insists.

Andrew Jennings, that formidable investigator, is the one who sent relevant accounts and letters to the FBI.

And, finally, more trouble for Blatter. Transparency International have pulled out of a reform "drive" because the senior adviser, Mark Pieth, demands to be paid.

So it goes on.

FBI...Jennings

Platini for president? Oh, come on...

Meanwhile, if Michel Platini is due to inherit the FIFA mantle of Blatter, what hope for football? He is beyond doubt as pure as the driven snow, but it beggars belief that he should now publicly, having voted for Qatar's World Cup bid, say that the tournament be played there not in the stupefying heat of summer but in the winter; which he fatuously insists would be no harm to European soccer. The old John McEnroe cry of "You cannot be serious" seems to go up.

To give him his due, Platini is making a bold attempt to limit the financial excesses of the Manchester Citys and Chelseas of this world. But to put him in the FIFA presidency, though he is certainly more acceptable than Blatter, would plainly be courting disaster. And his bloated, oversized, drawn-out Europa League competition is surely a blight on the game and a burden on those clubs who have to travel the length and breadth of the continent.

Poor Gary Speed

The cruel horror of Gary Speed is compounded by its utter mystery. How could it happen when he was so successful in command of Wales, so seemingly genial and happy? WS

Mystery...Speed

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NO TURNING BACK:

The Euro 2012 draw set the ball rolling for the summer's finals in Poland and Ukraine. Keir Radnedge reports from Kiev

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2012 STARTS HERE

Kiev football strongman Grygoriy Surkis was grinning from ear to ear as UEFA took over the city's Palace of Arts for the Euro 2012 draw. The delight of the country's football federation president owed everything to the sight of the event taking place on Ukraine soil at all. Only on the day did Surkis and UEFA president Michel Platini admit openly how close Poland's partner had come to losing the finals altogether.

UEFA's main event sits at number three in the world sports event rankings, behind the World Cup and Olympic Games, and this is one reason why, in 2016, it will expand from 16 teams to 24 when France plays host in a more traditional style.

However, this summer's tournament presents perhaps a greater challenge. Holland/Belgium was the first conjoined stage in 2000, then Austria/Switzerland in 2008. But heading into the lands beyond the old frontier of the Iron Curtain for a third co-hosting has been a severe test of nerve for the European federation and its partners.

Poland has always been up with the preparation game, despite an unhappy background of corruption claims and counter-claims in the domestic game.

But Ukraine's ability to push through the essential minimum work remained highly questionable. The coincidence of the current appeal by former prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko against a jail term for abuse of office serves as a reminder of the fragility of Ukraine's post-Soviet democracy.

But there will be no need to seek emergency staging assistance from Germany or Hungary as had been feared. The Euro's opening match will be in the Polish capital of Warsaw on June 8 and the Final in the rebuilt Olympic Stadium in Kiev on July 1. (The "Olympic" label is permissible because the stadium site hosted football during the 1980 Moscow Games, when Ukraine was within the Soviet Union; just as the Wroclaw training venue in Poland is an Olympic stadium because it hosted football at the 1936 Games when the city was in the eastern corner of Germany.)

The Kiev stadium has a working capacity of 68,055 which will be reduced to 60,000 for the finals because of the space demands for media, sponsors and signage. A section of the roof briefly caught fire during an opening ceremony featuring pop singer Shakira, but all went peacefully at the re-opening game in November, a 3-3 draw between Ukraine and Germany.

Spain face Italy

If Spain want to be in Kiev for the Final, closing in on history as the first nation to retain the Henri Delaunay Trophy in all its 52 years, they will have to overcome Italy at the virtual outset. Vicente Del Bosque's champions and world-ranking leaders have been slotted into Group C along with the 1968 champions, plus Republic of Ireland, who are led by veteran Italian coach Giovanni Trapattoni, and Croatia.

Intriguingly, Trapattoni has never lost to his home country: his record is three matches played, one won, two drawn.

The highlights of Group A were both Polish, with the co-hosts being drawn together with Russia and, then being handed Greece, shock winners in 2004, as their opponents in the opening match in the new National Stadium in Warsaw on June 8. Completing the mini-league were Czech Republic, who are very satisfied to be playing all their games in Wroclaw, the closest venue to their own border.

Group B was the obvious pick as the "group of death", with three previous champions in Holland (1988), Denmark (1992), and Germany (1972, 1980 and 1996), along with Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal. Coincidentally, Denmark and Portugal were in the same qualifying group in which Morten Olsen's side came out on top, condemning Ronaldo and his team-mates to the play-off route.

England play in Ukraine

England, who had decided in advance to make their base in Krakow, Poland, must play all their first-round games in Ukraine after being drawn in Group D with the co-hosts, plus Sweden and a reviving France, who are no longer the grumpy, dysfunctional team who crashed out in the first round of the last World Cup.

The draw cost Poland federation president Grzegorz Lato the princely sum of €20 as he had bet Platini that England would be drawn in Poland's group. That, however, was a brief moment of levity for Lato who is fighting for survival amid a power struggle at home involving a sponsor, a new sports minister and his own recently sacked general secretary.

> Only on the day did Surkis and Platini admit openly how close Poland's partner had come to losing the finals

There are no such problems for Surkis now that his nation is nailed on as co-host. But failure, he conceded, would have damaged Ukraine's image, not only in the sporting world but in terms of its ambitions for European integration.

He said: "When we started on the bid journey it seemed something fantastic and almost unachievable. But it became reality in 2007 when Michel Platini received the piece of paper with the name of Poland and Ukraine on it.

"Now we can appreciate the patience and wisdom of UEFA in its approach towards the problems involved, especially towards Ukraine, because we had to create a new infrastructure not only for sport but for all the other segments: airports, runways, new motorways.

"We had to modernise the entire country and without UEFA's patience we couldn't have been where we are sitting today. I would also pay tribute to UEFA's general secretary [Gianni Infantino] who would have faced an enormous challenge if Ukraine had not proved able to fulfil the guarantees."

In May 2009 UEFA had considered using six venues in Poland and only two in Ukraine. Surkis said that Platini, after meeting Ukraine's state president 18 months ago, had commented: "I trust this man – but I cannot believe that within such a short term it will be possible to prove that your country will be completely ready."

Eventually, in September, Platini spoke out publicly to

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Big night in Kiev...giant screens show the draw as it unfolds in the city's Palace of Arts

acknowledge that Ukraine would be ready, and he told those listening that he was confident that the few minor problems which still remained could be resolved by June 2012.

Eighteen-month plan

Surkis recalled that the former Soviet Union had managed remarkable achievements by the use of five-year plans, but what Ukraine had managed was an 18-month plan.

He added: "Never in the past 20 or 30 years had there been such pressure to upgrade a country's entire infrastructure in so short a time.

"In 2008 Switzerland and Austria just had to adapt existing facilities, but we had to create practically an entire new national infrastructure."

Surkis also took credit on a wider stage, suggesting that UEFA's eventual expression of confidence had been a key factor in FIFA's decision – exactly a year earlier – to award the 2018 World Cup hosting to northern neighbour Russia.

Infantino, who conducted the draw for the finals after state president Viktor Yanukovych had welcomed European football on behalf of Ukraine, said: "There were quite a lot of ups and downs and the executive meeting we had in Bordeaux two years ago was crucial to the whole process.

"Now what has been done is really surprising. The work that has been done here, in three or four years, usually needs 20 years.

Europe united...(from left) Surkis, Platini and Lato

"There were a few hot moments, and some hot discussions as well, but I think they brought our respective teams closer together to make history...it will have a major impact on these two nations far beyond next summer." WS

THE STATS

- The total prize money available at Euro 2012 will be €196million, up from €184m in 2008 with a pot of €23.5m for the winners.

  Each of the 16 participating teams will be guaranteed a minimum €8m, plus performance bonuses in the group stage of €1m for a win and €500,000 for a draw. A further €1m bonus will go to the team finishing third in each of the four initial mini-leagues.

  In the knockout stage each quarter-finalist will earn €2m and each semi-finalist €3m. The runner-up in the final will add in a further €4.5m and the champions €7.5m.

- Around 1.4million fans will watch the 31 matches live in the eight stadia (Donetsk, Kiev, Lviv and Kharkiv in Ukraine; Gdansk, Poznan, Warsaw and Wroclaw in Poland). They will pay between €30 and €600 for their tickets, with the cheapest having been cut 50 per cent by UEFA by comparison with Austria/Switzerland as a cost-of-living concession.

- An average of 150million TV viewers are expected to watch each match live in more than 200 territories around the world.

- The tournament itself is expected to generate around €1.3billion through the four main revenue streams: media rights (62 per cent), commercial rights from sponsorship, licensing and merchandising (22 per cent), ticketing (nine per cent) and hospitality (seven per cent).

Just the ticket...Euro 2012 mascots Slavek and Slavko help Platini launch the ticket sales

SUPPORTING ACTS

Winners...Peter Schmeichel and Zinedine Zidane (centre) lead a host of Europe's former stars at the draw ceremony

UEFA produced a star-studded line-up of previous Euro winners to help general secretary Gianni Infantino with the draw process: Russia's Viktor Ponedelnik (1960), Spain's Luis Suarez (1964), Italy's Gianni Rivera (1968), West Germany's Paul Breitner (1972), Czechoslovakia's Antonin Panenka (1976), West Germany's Horst Hrubesch (1980), France's Alain Giresse (1984), Holland's Marco Van Basten (1988), Denmark's Peter Schmeichel (1992), Germany's Oliver Bierhoff (1996), France's Zinedine Zidane (2000), Greece's Antonios Nikopolidis (2004) and Spain's Joan Capdevila (2008).

THE DRAW

* All times BST

Group A

Poland
Russia
Greece
Czech Republic

FRIDAY, JUNE 8
Warsaw: Poland v Greece (17.00)
Wroclaw: Russia v Czech Republic (19.45)

TUESDAY, JUNE 12
Wroclaw: Greece v Czech Republic (17.00)
Warsaw: Poland v Russia (19.45)

SATURDAY, JUNE 16
Wroclaw: Czech Republic v Poland (19.45)
Warsaw: Greece v Russia (19.45)

Group B

Holland
Denmark
Germany
Portugal

SATURDAY, JUNE 9
Kharkiv: Holland v Denmark (17.00)
Lviv: Germany v Portugal (19.45)

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 13
Lviv: Denmark v Portugal (17.00)
Kharkiv: Holland v Germany (19.45)

SUNDAY, JUNE 17
Kharkiv: Portugal v Holland (19.45)
Lviv: Denmark v Germany (19.45)

Group C

Spain
Italy
Rep of Ireland
Croatia

SUNDAY, JUNE 10
Gdansk: Spain v Italy (17.00)
Poznan: Republic of Ireland v Croatia (19.45)

THURSDAY, JUNE 14
Poznan: Italy v Croatia (17.00)
Gdansk: Spain v Republic of Ireland (19.45)

MONDAY, JUNE 18
Gdansk: Croatia v Spain (19.45)
Poznan: Italy v Republic of Ireland (19.45)

Group D

Ukraine
Sweden
France
England

MONDAY, JUNE 11
Donetsk: France v England (17.00)
Kiev: Ukraine v Sweden (19.45)

FRIDAY, JUNE 15
Donetsk: Ukraine v France (17.00)
Kiev: Sweden v England (19.45)

TUESDAY, JUNE 19
Donetsk: England v Ukraine (19.45)
Kiev: Sweden v France (19.45)

Quarter-finals

THURSDAY, JUNE 21
QF1: Warsaw: Winner A v Runner-up B (19.45)

FRIDAY, JUNE 22
QF2: Gdansk: Winner B v Runner-up A (19.45)

SATURDAY, JUNE 23
QF3: Donetsk: Winner C v Runner-up D (19.45)

SUNDAY, JUNE 24
QF4: Kiev: Winner D v Runner-up C (19.45)

Semi-finals

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 27
SF1: Donetsk: Winner QF1 v Winner QF3 (19.45)

THURSDAY, JUNE 28
SF2: Warsaw: Winner QF2 v Winner QF4 (19.45)

FINAL

SUNDAY, JULY 1
Kiev (19.45)

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THE GOALKEEPERS

Modern...Neuer

The standard-bearers

Europe's big-name captains and experienced campaigners who lead by example

It was no surprise when respondents in a recent Gallic opinion poll overwhelmingly named Lyon keeper **HUGO LLORIS** as the player who best represented the values of France's national team.

Not only is he admired for his exceptional ability as a preventer of goals and utter consistency, his unflappable temperament, sense of perspective and modesty make him the ideal professional sportsman. Though he does not shout the loudest or have the most charisma, he clearly is one of the side's few veritable leaders. Coach Laurent Blanc has shocked many by not naming a permanent captain, but the 24-year-old has to be in the running for the armband.

Whereas his closest rival, Marseille's Steve Mandanda, is brilliant but prone to gaffes, Lloris is the epitome of steadiness. Whether his side is dominating or under pressure, he thinks, moves and acts in the same way. The son of a banker, his cool head in the white-hot heat of tournament battle is a distinct plus for the French.

However talented a player is, he still needs the dice to roll favourably for him on occasion, and they certainly did for **MANUEL NEUER** when, at the tail-end of the 2009-10 season, Germany's number one Rene Adler was ruled out of that year's World Cup finals with damaged ribs.

Second-in-line Neuer was promptly handed the gloves, and from that moment on the achievements have come thick and fast: a string of fine displays as Germany finished third in South Africa; an automatic berth in his country's starting XI; a leading role in hometown club Schalke's qualification for the semi-finals of last term's Champions League; a £20million move to Bayern Munich last summer; and last, but no means least, his election as German Footballer of the Year for 2011, only the sixth keeper to win the award.

Cool...Lloris

Class...Cech

Veteran...Given

Now with 25 full caps to his name and rightly regarded in the world-class bracket, the 25-year-old fits the bill for Germany in so many different ways. Combining exceptional reflexes, excellent work in one-on-one situations and unwavering levels of concentration, Neuer springs instantly into life when the alarm bells ring. And if that was not enough, he is also magnificent in his distribution, being so quick to compute possibilities and initiate an attack with a precision throw or pass.

Under coach Joachim Low, the Germany team slip into a higher gear at the drop of a hat and Neuer is often the man to flick the switch. A thoroughly modern keeper, Low constantly talks about the necessity for flexible players and Neuer is the perfect example.

Still going strong after a half-dozen

storenvy.com

In the first of a new series on the potential stars of Euro 2012, Nick Bidwell looks at the keepers who are likely to feature in Poland and Ukraine

Competitive...Buffon

major international tournaments (four World Cups and two European Championships), Italy's goalkeeping monument **GIGI BUFFON** is more important to the *Azzurri* than ever, a much needed source of know-how, personality and steely competitiveness wrapped in a boyish smile. As hungry for success as ever, his inspirational presence in Italy's ranks could be the spark for a renaissance.

It is increasingly common to hear so-called football experts state that Czech Republic and Chelsea keeper **PETR CECH** is no longer quite as imperial between the sticks as he used to be. However, all things are relative and even if his mark these days is seven or eight out of 10 rather than the perfect score of yore, he remains a class act, crucial to his country for his memory bank of pressure-cooker games, reflexes and defence-calming qualities. Outstanding as the Czechs reached the last-four of Euro 2004, he can still turn the clock back.

The first Spain captain to lift the World Cup when he raised the trophy to the heavens in 2010, Real Madrid's **IKER CASILLAS** is both a perceptive and respected skipper, and a fantastic practitioner of the art of positioning and anticipation.

Undoubtedly more conciliatory and open than many of the previous wearers of the *Roja* armband, the 30-year-old has brought with him a new form of leadership, subtle encouragement and softly-spoken ambition as opposed to macho ranting and raving.

The glory days of the 1970s when the *Oranje* could prosper with erratic keepers such as Jan Jongbloed and Piet Schrijvers are long gone. Holland coach Bert Van Marwijk knows it is fundamental to have a strong defensive base and he has a most reliable and professional of custodians in **MAARTEN STEKELENBURG**, who this season moved from Ajax to Roma.

Sweden's long-serving **ANDREAS ISAKSSON** is homing in on a century of international caps – a fine achievement for the PSV Eindhoven man and one which flies in the face of the adage that good guys don't come first.

Republic of Ireland's **SHAY GIVEN** has, in a brilliant 15-year international career, only competed in one major tournament – the 2002 World Cup, in which he was heroic throughout. The Republic are obsessed with clean sheets but coach Giovanni Trapattoni can relax with the Aston Villa keeper marshalling the back line.

Albeit with the occasional lapse, **STIPE PLETIKOSA** has served Croatia well for the past dozen years and though young Dinamo Zagreb keeper Ivan Kelava has many admirers, Pletikosa, now with Rostov in Russia, ought to hold on for one last tournament.

Respected...Casillas

Work in progress

The options still open to some undecided coaches

Back in favour...Sorensen

Just as EURO 2012 co-hosts Ukraine have found it difficult to deliver some of their tournament stadia on time, so coach Oleg Blokhin has similarly fallen behind schedule in his job of identifying his first-choice keeper. This season, Blokhin has tried no fewer than four goalies – Dynamo Kiev veteran **OLEKSANDR SHOVKOVSKIY**, **ANDRIY DIKAN** of Spartak Moscow and **OLEKSANDR RYBKA** and **ANDRIY PYATOV**, both of Shakhtar Donetsk, and clearly the time is fast approaching when a definitive decision has to be made.

Late developer...Dikan

A boss renowned for his conservatism, Blokhin would, in normal circumstances plump for Shovkovskiy, the third most-capped player in Ukraine's history. However, the 36-year-old has been notoriously injury-prone in recent seasons.

Former under-21 side stalwart Rybka has long been earmarked to step into the shoes of penalty-stopping expert Shovkovskiy and has sparkled since joining Shakhtar from Dynamo Kiev this summer. However, the fact remains that he is an international novice with just two senior caps, and in the 3-3 draw at home to Germany in November he was decidedly jumpy. Blokhin may slowly but surely be coming to the conclusion that his best bet between the posts is the

Chance...Tzorvas

On the up

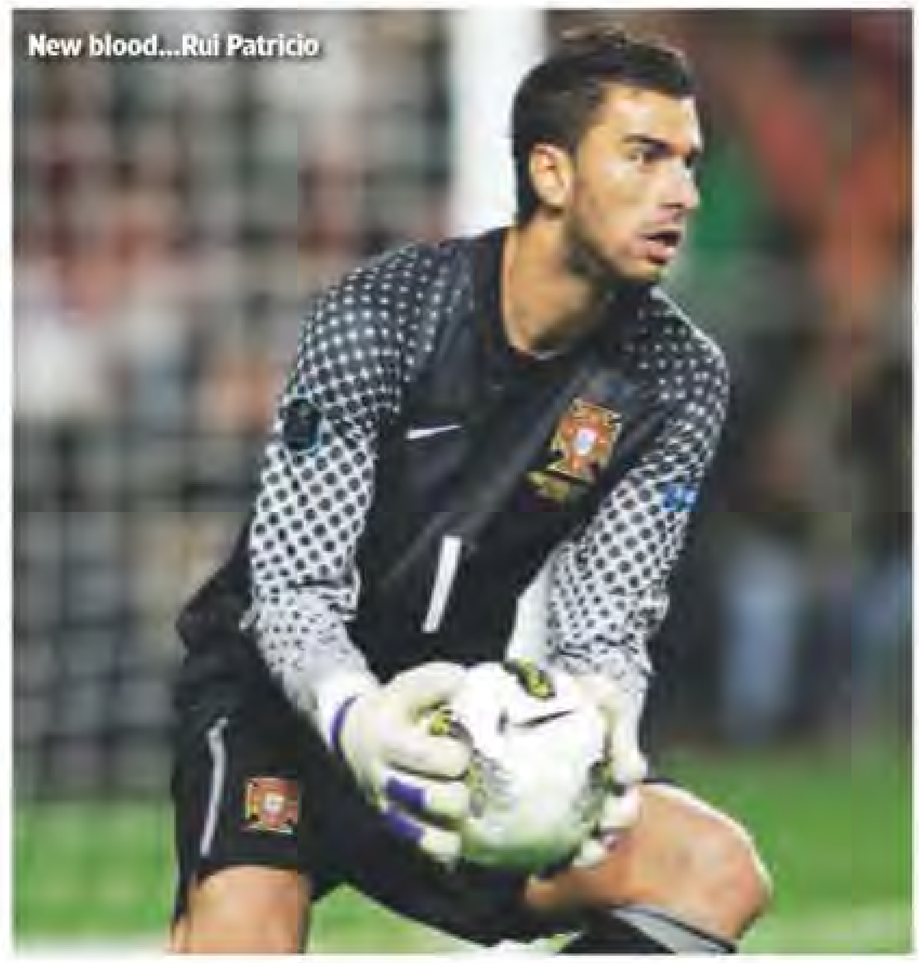
Youngsters rising to the challenge

sober and effective Dikan, a late developer who only broke into the national team last year aged 32.

Another coach facing a thorny selection problem in this department is Greece's Fernando Santos, whose first-choice keeper **MICHALIS SIFAKIS** is currently out with a long-term knee injury and is only due to return to action for his club, Aris Salonika, in February. While Sifakis has been sidelined, the slack has been taken up by **ALEXANDROS TZORVAS** of Palermo, who is settling in well in Serie A following his move from Panathinaikos.

Also studying their depth charts are Russia, whose regular custodian **IGOR AKINFEEV** is an injured reserve until the spring after blowing cruciate ligaments while playing for CSKA Moscow. Deputy **VYACHESLAV MALAFEEV** has bags of experience and is capable enough but not quite in the same league as Akinfeev.

Denmark's Morten Olsen must choose between **THOMAS SORENSEN**, who has only just regained his place at Stoke City, or **ANDERS LINDEGAARD**, who is a back-up for Manchester United, as a lack of regular match action could be a recipe for disaster.


New blood...Rui Patricio

Praise...Szczesny

After one mistake too many by Portugal keeper Eduardo – particularly the comical goal he conceded in the 1-0 loss in Norway early in the qualifying campaign – new boss Paulo Bento understandably felt compelled to ring the changes in this most important of positions. And his decision to blood Sporting Lisbon's **RUI PATRICIO** has paid considerable dividends.

Fortunately for Bento, the 24-year-old newcomer has turned out to be the ideal successor: glacial in temperament, always focused and with all the technical bases covered.

As a junior he used to play up front, and a popular school of thought is that this has helped him in his goalkeeping role, not only making him comfortable on the ball but also giving him an insight into the mentality of forwards.

A graduate of Sporting's ever-productive academy, he has served his country's youth and under-21 sides with distinction and made his inaugural appearance for the senior side in November 2010, appearing as a second-half sub in the sensational 4-0 friendly win over Spain.

While statistics can be bent and manipulated every which way to substantiate a particular point of view, one number not open to interpretation is the extraordinary 16-game England career of Manchester City's **JOE HART**, who since making his full international bow, in a friendly against Trinidad & Tobago in June 2008, has yet to suffer international defeat.

A supremely confident individual with a flair for game-changing saves, the 24-year-old is the top-class keeper that England have needed for so long now. Following the retirement of David Seaman close to a decade ago, they have tried to fill the gap with several candidates, but all have had their flaws.

Boosted by City's pace-setting start to this season's Premier League, and by the post-graduate course that is the Champions League, Hart is clearly a young man for the big occasion and is unlikely to be fazed by the prospect of a European Championship.

The pressures which all host nations have to contend with will not cause Poland's up-and-coming **WOJCIECH SZCZESNY** to have sleepless nights.

Brimming over with self-belief – some might say cockiness – the 21-year-old Arsenal keeper can be almost chillingly sure of himself. But in contrast to the boxer who talks a good fight but hits the canvas in the first round, Szczesny invariably backs up the rhetoric with impressive deeds.

Unbeaten...Hart

The truth is that he has every right to feel satisfied with himself. At the start of last season he was Arsenal's fourth choice, but he established himself in the second half of the campaign.

"It's very unusual to see a young keeper with so much strength of character, leadership and good grasp of his craft," enthused ex-Germany keeper Oliver Kahn after witnessing Szczesny put on a show in Poland's 2-2 draw with the *Nationalmannschaft* in the autumn. "He looks the real deal. I had the feeling I was watching myself 20 years ago."

Highly recommended by Kahn? He must be good. WS

Experience...Malafeev

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Exclusive reports from our worldwide network of correspondents

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Belgian coach Eric Gerets believes his team can win the African Nations Cup.

SID LOWE
in Madrid

Barcelona reassert their dominance

Just when Real Madrid thought they had a chance to beat their eternal rivals...

Humbled...once again, Messi and Barcelona brought Ronaldo and his team-mates to their knees

Beating the rest is one thing; beating Barcelona something else entirely. It was all set up for a power shift in Spain, with Real Madrid bringing a Catalan cycle to a close. But Pep Guardiola's team would not be moved. Barcelona flew to Japan looking to become the club world champions having re-established themselves as the favourites to be Spanish champions – for the fourth season in a row.

The pre-game narrative was turned on its head. How quickly doubts can be expelled; how quickly they can assail the previously impervious.

Real Madrid had won 15 out of 15 competitive games, equalling a club record, and scored an astonishing 39 goals in their previous 10 league matches. Barcelona, meanwhile, travelled to the Santiago Bernabeu having just been beaten away by Getafe and having twice been held on the road. They had won just two games away in the league – and both of those by a solitary goal, in Granada and Gijon.

In his second season – a luxury not afforded to any of his predecessors in over seven years – Jose Mourinho appeared to be getting there. Part circumstance, part obligation, part meticulous preparation, part natural evolution and part gigantic investment, Madrid were getting stronger. The previous weekend they had beaten a Sporting Gijon side whose coach described Real as "alarmingly good".

Barcelona, by contrast, seemed ill at ease. Formations were changing, and so was personnel; tiredness had set in; the ball travelled without its normal speed. For the first time since Guardiola had been Barcelona boss, the bookmakers had Madrid down as favourites to win.

Twenty-three seconds into the game, that appeared justified. Barcelona kicked-off and Madrid pressured the ball from the start: all the way back into Barcelona's half and back to goalkeeper Victor Valdes. His pass was a simple one but then, Madrid still pressing, the ball was given back to him again. This time he got it wrong. His pass only found Angel Di Maria, whose ball to Karim Benzema was blocked. Mesut Ozil's follow-up took a deflection and looped up to Benzema, who scored. The ball had not yet been in Madrid's half and already they were one up.

One up and nine points ahead; sort of. Victory would put Real Madrid six points clear with a game in hand at the top of the table and, having won 15 in a row, no one doubted that they would win that game in hand. Few doubted that nine points would be almost definitive, either.

The league could be Real Madrid's before Christmas. In a competition in which both teams rack up colossal amounts of points, in which Madrid have topped 90 for the last two seasons and still not won the title, nine points would prove a huge gap to overcome.

On the verge

Madrid had dropped five points all season. Last year, Barcelona clinched the league having dropped just 14 in the entire campaign (although they would drop four more once the title was tied up). So, here were Madrid on the verge of a virtual nine points lead – and on the verge of a league title for the first time in four years; on the verge of shifting power and finally ending Barcelona's dominance.

But then it happened. After six minutes Leo Messi went racing through the Madrid defence and drew a sharp

sportings.com

save from Iker Casillas.

It was a warning. Cristiano Ronaldo missed a good chance to make it 2-0 to Real Madrid and then, on the half hour, Messi picked the ball up inside his own half, dashed away from Ozil, drew three players into him and released the ball through the gap for Alexis Sanchez to score. Bit by bit, Barcelona had started to get control of the game, overcoming Madrid's intense, high pressure.

And after overcoming the first wave of pressure they found the pitch opening out in front of them.

The more Barcelona kept the ball, the quicker Madrid tired chasing it. The "bestial" physical condition of which Gijon's Manuel Preciado had spoken the week before was no longer apparent.

An often-overlooked aspect of Barcelona's game was being applied once more: the ability to control the tempo and direction of a match, slowly squeezing the life out of the opposition. Once again, they had made very, very good opponents look average. And when Madrid did make chances they wasted them as Ronaldo's header went wide and Kaka, on as a substitute, was denied by Valdes.

> This result suggests that the difference between the two teams remains significant

Barcelona had been denied the ball and denied fluency in the opening minutes, but following the goal Dani Alves was pushed forward, leaving a back three. Andres Iniesta went left and Messi was all over the pitch, involved in everything. By half-time they had pushed their possession stats to over 50 per cent; by the end it was 62 per cent. Xavi gave them a 2-1 lead after half-time with a deflected volley and then Cesc Fabregas scored the third on 65 minutes. The final 25 minutes, played out against a dwindling crowd as Madrid fans made their way sadly to the exits, saw Barcelona dominate almost completely.

"We were better than them," said Xavi afterwards, while Guardiola praised his players for remaining brave and sticking to their philosophy.

Iniesta was imperious, Xavi in control, Dani Alves covered every inch of the pitch, Sanchez was a bundle of energy, movement and edge, and Carles Puyol and Gerard Pique had Ronaldo largely under wraps. Every time Ronaldo approached Pique he dived, as if lacking confidence in his ability to beat him. As for the typical subplot, the press photograph summed it up: it showed Messi standing there while Ronaldo, on his knees before the Argentinian, appeared to be preparing to clean his boots for him.

One win for Mourinho

Mourinho noted that Messi might have got a second yellow – it would have been harsh but he certainly took a risk with a foul on Xabi Alonso – but mostly preferred to talk about bad luck. The problem is that the luck argument did not wash. Mourinho has faced Barcelona eight times with Madrid and won just once, losing four times, with an aggregate score of Barcelona 17 Real Madrid 8.

Ultimately, there could be no questioning Barcelona's superiority in this game. All those other games did not provide a real measure of Madrid; Barcelona did. And while Madrid felt that they had closed the gap – they won last year's Spanish Cup and been the better side in the Super Cup, as well as hiding behind a conspiratorial discourse to explain their Champions League exit – this result suggests that the difference between the teams remains significant.

Yes, it could have gone another way and there were moments when the match might have changed, but this felt like a Barcelona side reasserting their authority amid the doubts. In that sense, it felt a bit like the famous 6-2 in 2009. It is forgotten now but Madrid went into that match on a long victorious run of 17 wins and one draw in 18. They had even taken the lead. But just when they thought there was a chance, Barcelona put them back in their place.

Even the partisan Madrid press had no doubt. *AS*'s cover ran on "the best team won", while *Marca*'s cover led on "Not much Madrid; Mucho Barcelona".

Mucho. And then some. WS

HOWARD JOHNSON
in Paris

PSG fall in *Le Classique*

Marseille pile the pressure on rivals' coach Kombouare

On target...Amalfitano was among the scorers in Marseille's commanding victory over PSG

Paris Saint-Germain may be the name on everybody's lips at the minute – thanks to the excitement over a certain LA-based Englishman who isn't even on the club's books as yet – but right now there are pressing matters out on the pitch that need addressing.

That much was clear at the end of November when PSG travelled down to the south coast to play their part in the first league meeting of the season with arch-rivals Marseille. And with the home side in all sorts of trouble – poor results, rumours that the club might be sold, public spats between coach and sporting director, not to mention between coach and players – it looked like the capital club had their best chance of taking three points at the Stade Velodrome in many a year.

However, it didn't turn out that way and Marseille's Didier Deschamps continued his impressive run against PSG. In seven home fixtures, as coach of Monaco and Marseille, he has posted five wins and two draws.

The latest victory, by a comfortable 3-0 margin, didn't flatter the previously stuttering *l'OM* by any means. The result was never in doubt after Loic Remy opened the scoring on nine minutes, with a smartly-taken header, and the hosts cruised home with room to spare thanks to further goals from Morgan Amalfitano and Andre Ayew.

It was a triumph for Deschamps, who had been under pressure following altercations with sporting director Jose Anigo and striker Andre-Pierre Gignac – who was left out of the squad for the big game after insulting Deschamps in training. The France World Cup-winning hero got his tactics spot on, recalling Argentinian playmaker Lucho Gonzalez after a month on the periphery.

Lucho pulled the strings all night long and gave something of a footballing lesson to his PSG compatriot Javier Pastore, who has gone off the boil in spectacular fashion since his impressive start to the season.

Pastore is one quarter of Paris' "Fantastic Four" – alongside Jeremy Menez, Nene and Kevin Gameiro – but the men who were supposed to help PSG blow away the opposition this season simply haven't been able to produce the goods recently. Striker Gameiro, for example, had not scored in five consecutive Ligue 1 matches – his leanest run of form since the 2008-09 season when he was with Lorient.

> Argentinian playmaker Lucho Gonzalez pulled the strings all night and gave a lesson to compatriot Javier Pastore, who has gone off the boil in spectacular fashion

While PSG headed back north having picked up just one point from their last three league games, Marseille's victory lifted them to ninth, nine points behind PSG after 15 games. Just a couple of months ago this seemed impossible following Marseille's disastrous start to the campaign.

PSG boss Antoine Kombouare must be a very nervous man right now. Since the injection of Qatari money into the club there have been rumours that the paymasters were only biding their time before dispensing with him. Names in the frame have veered from the outlandish (Jose Mourinho) to the credible (Carlo Ancelotti), but the defeat at Marseille and a recent run of iffy form will have done nothing to help Kombouare sleep soundly at night.

Taking advantage of Paris' fall from grace were Montpellier, who have been consistently punching above their weight. And talking of weight, there's never any ignoring the gargantuan form of their president Louis Nicollin, a man whose mouth is as big as his waistband.

On the same weekend that PSG went down at Marseille, Montpellier notched up an impressive 3-1 victory away to Sochaux to open up a three-point lead over Kombouare's side. Newly-capped France forward Olivier Giroud weighed in with a hat-trick and Nicollin, never short of a "colourful" expression, was quick to announce that it would be a disgrace for clubs such as PSG, Marseille, Lyon and Lille if his "little club" went on to become French champions. "If that happened and I were them I'd stick a sausage up my arse," said Nicollin.

What remains to be seen in the upper echelons of French football, of course, is whether PSG can put some colour back in to their own game – and whether a certain Monsieur Beckham will be on board to act as the catalyst. WS

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JOEL RICHARDS
in Buenos Aires

Boca back on top

Buenos Aires powerhouse wrap up apertura with two games to spare

After three disappointing, disjointed and acrimonious years, Boca are back on top in Argentina. Ruthless and workmanlike, they secured their 24th league title with a 3-0 win over Banfield at the Bombonera.

Creeping closer to River Plate's record of 33 league titles, and doing so while their rivals are currently battling it out in the second division, added an extra spring to the players' step during their lap of honour. River losing to Boca Unidos the day before *Los Xeneizes* won the title made things even sweeter.

Despite marching a clear path towards the apertura title this year, the season started with intense pressure on Boca Juniors coach Julio Cesar Falcioni. After a troublesome first six months at the club and a goalless draw to Olimpo on day one, rumours soon circled that his position was under threat. A week later, however, Boca swept past newly promoted Union, winning 4-0 at home, and never looked back.

Abandoning his preferred 4-4-2, which led to him dropping Juan Roman Riquelme the previous season, Falcioni restored the iconic number 10 as the focal point of his new 4-3-1-2. And Riquelme was superb in the first half of the season, as Boca built their lead at the top of the table, before injury limited his participation in the final weeks.

Out of reach...Boca celebrate clinching the title by beating Banfield

Elsewhere, Falcioni shored up the defence and improvised, when necessary, up front. Signing 38-year-old Rolando Schiavi raised many eyebrows, not least after his inconsistent form at Newell's the previous term, yet the rejuvenated Schiavi excelled as the leader of the back line.

> At last, there is a sense of stability at Boca Juniors

Legendary goalscorer Martin Palermo retired in June, easing the pressure-cooker atmosphere in the dressing room, but it left the attack without its reference point. Lucas Viatri, finally able to step out of Palermo's considerable shadow, managed three goals in 11 games before rupturing knee ligaments. Panic spread and rumours of replacements stretched as far as including Carlos Tevez. However, the low-profile Nicolas Blandi – having returned from loan at Argentinos Juniors – stepped up and scored four in the next two games.

Falcioni created a tight unit that rarely punished opponents – only scoring more than two goals in three matches before lifting the title – but one which was uncompromising in defence. And at last there was a sense of stability at the club.

Since Carlos Ischia's side won the 2008 apertura, four coaches had taken care of the first team before Falcioni joined in late 2010. Alfio Basile's second spell at the club was short lived and ended after losing a pre-season friendly, albeit to River Plate. Claudio Borghi, meanwhile, rarely seemed comfortable in the magnifying-glass environment at the club, famously saying: "Coaching at Boca is like having sex with the window open." Neither of the interim coaches Abel Alves or Roberto Pompei were able to galvanise the team.

On the same day that Boca wrapped up the championship, the club also held its presidential election. The national government had their candidate in current club president Jorge Amor Ameal, while Buenos Aires mayor and former Boca president Mauricio Macri, who is one of the main figures of the opposition to the government, had his candidate in Daniel Angelici.

For Ameal, not even presenting a record £7.5million profit for the 2010-11 season, signing up Riquelme on a four-year contract and winning the title was enough. Macri, who had built the base upon which Boca won 16 trophies during his reign from 1996 to 2007, was Angelici's trump card, and won with 54 per cent of the vote.

Many fans are concerned by the potential ramifications of the results as Angelici had resigned as club treasurer after opposing the four-year deal offered to Riquelme by Ameal.

But while the politics rumble on, Boca are not just celebrating this title, they are also dusting off their passports.

After a two-year absence the club return to the Libertadores Cup – a competition they won four times in the last decade. Boca are just one win away from levelling Independiente's record of seven titles. WS

ARGENTINIAN CHAMPIONSHIP WINNERS

PADDY AGNEW
in Rome

Reality bites for *Azzurri*

Players face political realities ahead of tough Euro 2012 draw

Italy coach Cesare Prandelli was sanguine about the draw for the Euro finals which grouped his side with Spain, Croatia and the Republic of Ireland, claiming that he would have preferred to avoid Giovanni Trapattoni's Ireland.

"We didn't want to play against Trapattoni for all sorts of reasons, but for us the important thing will be to arrive at the opening games fit and well," said Prandelli. "I don't know what I will say to 'Trap' before that game. We talked together here. He's very good at making situations like this easy and normal."

Two weeks earlier, Prandelli had been involved in a situation anything but "easy or normal", having taken the *Azzurri* to the small Calabrian town of Rizziconi, where they trained on a tiny pitch standing on land that originally belonged to the Crea clan of the local mafia, the 'Ndrangheta.

The team were greeted by the anti-mafia campaigning priest Don Luigi Ciotti, who told them: "Your gesture is an important one. It is about using the power of signs against the signs of power, of Mafioso power. You have big responsibility, you are an example for lots of kids, do not forget that. Sport is hope and hope means giving people a chance."

The land in question was originally sequestered from the mafiosi back in 1994, becoming the site of a little stadium in 2003. The problem was that – no doubt for good reason – people were afraid of the Crea family and no one wanted to use the pitch, which thus lay abandoned for four years before it was "opened" a second time in 2007.

Don Ciotti, who runs the anti-mafia movement *Libera*, invited Prandelli and his team down as a defiant gesture in the face of the mafia. Remember, the Calabrian mafia, the 'Ndrangheta, is not only the most powerful of all the mafias in modern Italy but also one which has always used football, especially small-time local football, as a way of insinuating itself inside the infrastructures of "legality".

"Football is fundamental down here," says mafia investigator Michele Prestipino. "It creates social consensus, it allows control of the territory and enables the recycling of money. The 'Ndrangheta is a parasite, once it gets inside an organism, it never leaves."

Prestipino's point is illustrated by the fact that, in September, two local amateur clubs, Rosarnese and Interpiana, were formally sequestered since they were under the control of the Pesce 'Ndrangheta family.

That was the context in which Prandelli's team was using "the power of signs against the signs of power". On the day after that well-received trip to Rizziconi, the national team paid a visit to a rather better known place, namely Palazzo Quirinale, home of Italian president Giorgio Napolitano.

Here *Azzurri* captain Gigi Buffon

WHAT THE PAPERS SAY...

La Gazzetta dello Sport
Tutto il rosa della vita

On the morning after the draw for Euro 2012, Italian reaction was twofold: firstly, this is a tough draw, and secondly, we have to deal with that "young fellow" Giovanni Trapattoni again.

***Gazzetta Dello Sport* suggested the draw had done few favours for Italy. Elsewhere, respected writer Xavier Jacobelli commented: "There will be three Italian coaches at Euro 2012 [Prandelli, Capello and Trapattoni] and that is a testimony to the quality of Italian football. The oldest of those three is a young fellow who was born back in 1939, someone who has become a living legend.**

"Speaking in Kiev tonight, Trap expressed the hope that neither his Ireland nor Italy will have to suffer too much when the two sides meet on June 18 next summer."

storiadiunpallone

Storemags.com

Making a statement...Italy train on a mini-pitch situated on land formerly belonging to the local mafia in Rizziconi

> "I don't know what I'll say to Trap before the game"
> Italy coach Cesare Prandelli ponders a Euro 2012 clash with his old friend's Ireland team

made a speech which showed that the lesson of the day before had not been lost on him and which suggested he could do worse than opt for a post-football career in politics.

"Our population needs the support of a political class that is coherent, prepared and responsible, and of a state that is represented by you, a clean and capable figure," he said. "We all look for answers, to get the show back on the road after these difficult moments. As for us, we'll do our best to honour the name of Italy on the field, wherever and whenever."

Impressive form

As for Serie A, Milan and Juventus, the two sides who basically dominated Italian football in the pre-Calciopoli era, between them winning 24 of the 34 titles disputed from 1972 and 2006, are battling it out at the top once more. Both have been showing impressive form of late. After losing 2-0 to Juventus in early October, Milan went on a run of seven wins and a draw. In the same period, Juve were perhaps less impressive in terms of points earned, recording five wins and three draws, but two of those wins came against Internazionale and Lazio, while one of the draws was against Napoli. In the meantime, Milan had been beating Palermo, Lecce, Parma, Roma, Catania, Chievo and Genoa, in that order.

Two games at the end of November, a 1-0 away win over Lazio and a thrilling 3-3 away draw with Napoli, suggested talk of Juventus reclaiming their place at the top of the pile is not premature. What was impressive in both games was the obvious solidity of the Juve mindset, coming back from 2-0 and then 3-1 down against Napoli, and also riding out the storm against a Lazio side which does not sell its hide cheaply.

Among those impressed was former Juventus and Italy coach Marcello Lippi, who said: "In the second half against Napoli, Juventus took advantage of the fact Napoli were still feeling the effects of their Champions League game against Manchester City the previous week and managed to haul themselves back in. It does not mean they will automatically win the title, but it is a guarantee Juve will be right in there to the very end."

Flying the flag... president Napolitano greets Buffon

Someone else with positive things to say about his old club was former Milan and Chelsea coach Carlo Ancelotti, who sees the *Rossoneri* as the team to beat. He told *Gazzetta Dello Sport*: "Even when things were going badly at the start of the season, Milan were still the favourites. They are the champions and also the side which has changed least."

Milan may be Ancelotti's favourites but it could be that an extended Champions League campaign will work against them and in favour of Juventus.

What is also clear is that, while they qualified for the second round of the Champions League easily enough, they are still some way behind the likes of Barcelona, who beat them 3-2 in Milan and drew 2-2 at Camp Nou in a game totally dominated by the Catalans. WS

NICK BIDWELL
in Munich

Strain proves too much for ref Rafati

Bundesliga official is latest to suffer mental health problems

Blame game...Rafati had suffered depression after coming under fire for a series of poor performances

The time: three minutes to three on a Saturday afternoon. The place: the Rhein-Energie-Stadion where Cologne are due to play Mainz in the Bundesliga. Little more than a half-hour before kick-off, spectators are stunned to be informed over the public address that the game will have to be postponed because there is no referee.

Ignorant as to the whys and wherefores of the situation, some fans whistle and jeer before making tracks for the car parks and tram stops. But it will not take long for the grumbling to turn to widespread sorrow. Soon supporters will hear the awful truth about the ill-fated fixture: that in the hours preceding the match, referee Babak Rafati had tried to take his own life. As astonishing as it is tragic.

Rafati, the lead official at 84 Bundesliga games since 2005 and formerly on the FIFA list, had slit his wrists in the bathroom of his hotel room. He surely would have died if the three other members of his team (Patrick Ittrich, Holger Henschel and Frank Willenborg) had not immediately gone to check on him after he had failed to turn up for a pre-match briefing.

> Rafati was depressed and overwhelmed by the fear of making the wrong call

The trio, receiving no answer when they knocked on his door, swiftly called hotel staff to provide them with a pass key. Once inside, and confronted with the dreadful scene, they had the wits and expertise to both administer first aid and call the emergency services.

Rafati, a German of Iranian roots who was employed by a bank in the northern city of Hanover, was rushed to a local hospital and, happily, pronounced out of danger by early evening, when he was able to speak to his father on the telephone. However, the psychological scars are sure to take much longer to heal than the physical ones.

In half-yearly polls of Bundesliga players organised by *Kicker* magazine, Rafati had been voted the worst official in the country on no fewer than four occasions and that sort of notoriety does nobody any favours. *Kicker* meant no harm; referees always will be criticised – it's unavoidable. But there has to be a limit to the barbs and those people who once set up an "Anti Babak Rafati" Facebook page need to reflect long and hard on their demonising ways.

The reasons that drove Rafati to the brink were revealed six days after the incident at the Hyatt Hotel. In a statement read by his lawyer, Sven Menke, the referee admitted he had been suffering with depression for the best part of a year-and-a-half and that he had become overwhelmed by the fear of making the wrong call.

Under pressure

"I know of no other group of people who are under more pressure than Bundesliga referees," says Herbert Fandel, chief of the German referees commission. Cue loud calls for video technology to "help" officials and for more mentoring and back-up for the whistle-blowers.

Just when you thought German football had had its fill of mental health stories, another emerges to send more chills down the spine. The list of victims in recent years is already way too long. The tormented national team goalkeeper (Robert Enke) who took his own life by stepping in front of a train; the hot prospect midfielder (Sebastian Deisler) who quit in 2007 after a lengthy battle with depression; the psychologically fragile Bayern Munich defender (Breno) who earlier this season burned down his own house; the high-profile coach (Ralf Rangnick) who stepped down as Schalke boss in September through burn-out.

The list does not end there. This autumn, Hanover keeper Markus Miller had to take time out with nervous exhaustion. Energie Cottbus' Czech striker Martin Fenin is receiving psychiatric help after falling from a hotel window in October while under the influence of alcohol and medication.

What makes the German game so susceptible? Is it more uncaring and more demanding on the nerves than elsewhere? Maybe the rash of mental health problems is merely a coincidence. Football is only one part of society and it might just be that in this fast-moving, dog-eat-dog world there are simply more stresses and strains for depression to exploit these days.

Ten per cent of all Germans suffer with depression or are in danger of falling prey to an illness which cuts right across the social spectrum.

"Everyone has strengths and weaknesses," says Michael Vesper, the director of the German Olympic Association. "The only difference is that in the Bundesliga it's all out in the open, with players, coaches and referees very much in the public eye. They have to cope with the world watching." WS

PHILIPPE GERMAIN
in Montreal

Painful transition

In a difficult year for the country's "big three", there was some light at the end of the tunnel

Stick with us...Vancouver finished bottom of the Western Conference but will hope for better times next season under new coach Rennie

First the good news: Toronto reached the quarter-finals of the CONCACAF Champions League for the first time, becoming only the second Canadian club, after Montreal Impact in 2008-2009, to make it to the last eight of the continental competition.

That, however, has to be tempered with a club-record-equalling low of just six wins in 30 MLS games for new coach Aron Winter in a campaign that saw the Reds miss the end-of-season MLS Cup play-offs for a fifth straight year.

Having replaced former Scotland striker Mo Johnston in charge of the club from the Queen City, Dutchman Winter faced criticism all year long for his attempts to play a 4-3-3 system that clearly didn't work. And he wasn't helped by the early-season loss of iconic national team midfielder Dwayne De Rosario, who had a very public salary dispute with Toronto. He was first traded to New York Red Bulls before settling with DC United a few weeks later and going on to finish as the league's joint-top scorer with 16 goals.

While even the most optimistic of pundits expects the club to spend another four to five years rebuilding, there were signs of an improvement with the acquisition of ex-AZ Alkmaar and PSV Eindhoven striker Danny Koevermans, who scored eight goals in 10 games to close the season. Ecuador winger Joao Plata, who stands just 5ft 3in, also proved to be a dynamic addition, joining on loan from LDU Quito and scoring four goals in five matches in the CONCACAF Champions League's preliminary round and group phase.

Rough ride

It was also a rough ride for MLS newcomers Vancouver Whitecaps on their return to top-flight football for the first time since the heydays of the old NASL in the early 1980s.

They kicked off the new era in style with a 4-0 hammering of rivals Toronto at Empire Stadium, their temporary home while BC Place Stadium was being given a £225million facelift. But just a few weeks later Icelandic coach Teitur Thordarson was judged unable of taking them to the next level. He was replaced by the far less popular director of soccer operations, Tom Soehn, who fared no better results-wise as Whitecaps finished bottom of the Western Conference with 28 points from 34 games.

There were bright spots, though, and Brazilian striker Camilo Sanvezzo, who scored 12 goals alongside Frenchman Eric Hassli (10), will be looking forward to a new attacking style next season under incoming coach Martin Rennie. The 36-year-old Scotsman, who has climbed the ranks of the North American game in the last six years, was one of the youngest people to be awarded a UEFA "A" coaching licence and he led Carolina RailHawks to the top of the table in the second-tier NASL in 2011.

Back on the East Coast, there was agony for Montreal Impact who, in their last season before becoming MLS' 19th club in March, missed the play-offs by a point despite having by far the biggest payroll in the NASL.

Coach Marc Dos Santos, one of the rare Canadians to hold a UEFA "A" licence, resigned during the campaign over what he claimed was interference from the club's higher management, and was temporarily replaced by sporting director Nick De Santis. The change in leadership caused a huge rift between the fans and president Joey Saputo over his controversial backing of De Santis.

The hiring of a new coach in Jesse Marsch – the former USA assistant coach with 14 seasons of MLS playing experience – calmed the waters, as did the acquisition of Internazionale's Colombia central defender Nelson Rivas. And reported talks with Chelsea striker Nicolas Anelka are a sign that Impact are not shy of taking the high road, whatever controversy lies ahead.

Fasten your seat belts: 2012 promises to be very exciting indeed. WS

CANADA'S CONCACAF STRUGGLE

Representation in quarter-finals of the CONCACAF Champions League since its inception in 2008

footymag.com

KEIR RADNEDGE
in Doha

Hosts seek trial run in 2014 finals

The tiny Gulf state has big plans for a first World Cup appearance

The fact that the 2022 hosts have never appeared in the World Cup finals is an embarrassment that veteran Brazilian coach Sebastiao Lazaroni has been tasked with ending before Qatar welcomes the footballing world to what will be the most compact finals in history.

Having been held 0-0 at home by neighbours Bahrain – led by former England caretaker manager Peter Taylor - in their penultimate preliminary game, Qatar now go to group leaders Iran on February 29 needing a draw to reach the final qualifying group stage.

Hassan Al Thawadi, who led Qatar's successful World Cup hosting bid and is now secretary general of the co-ordinating 2022 Supreme Council, has no doubt that in football terms the message is also onwards and upwards.

"I am very confident," says Al Thawadi. "Our goal is to qualify for the finals before 2022 and our teams are doing very well. Initiatives have been undertaken and Al Sadd winning the Champions League was an inspiration to the young people coming through our ASPIRE Academy to achieve their dreams. There is no limit to what you can achieve if you put your heart and soul into it."

Some of the young Qatari players are already from the state-of-the-art ASPIRE Academy and Al Thawadi believes that, with more graduates being introduced into the national youth teams "we will see the results in the years to come".

The Qataris are also looking to South America for inspiration, and national boss Lazaroni is just one of several Brazilian players and coaches in the local Qatar Stars League. Another is defender Moises Moura, who played in Russia with Spartak Moscow and Krylia Sovetov, then in Portugal with Boavista and Braga, and is now in his second season with Emir Cup-winners Al Rayyan.

"Football here is developing day by day," says the 32-year-old. "Al Sadd winning the Asian Champions League was very important. It was not only that they showed the whole of Asia how Qatari football is developing, it also proved something to people here."

Build a connection

In a country of three million, where only a quarter are local Qataris, establishing the concept of "owning" a national team is not a given. The players, directors and coaches have to build a connection – which is why flags bearing the profiles of the national team's stars festoon the roads leading to the main stadia in Doha.

One of the most sharp-eyed observers of the Qatari game is Al Khor's attacking midfielder Pa Modou Kah. He played in Holland for seven years, and then in Norway, and talks football with all the aggressive confidence common to so many Dutch-educated footballers. And so, unlike many other Qataris, he does not pull his punches.

"In Holland there is a different mentality and different standards because in Europe the pressure in a game and around the game is so much greater than here," says Kah. "Also, it's different in a match situation. In Europe you have a big crowd in the stadium, but here there are no spectators, by comparison, because everybody can watch football at home on television.

"I don't really mean the local league either. Here you can watch every game from the Premier League, every game from Italy, every game from Spain, Germany, wherever. You can watch the best in the world.

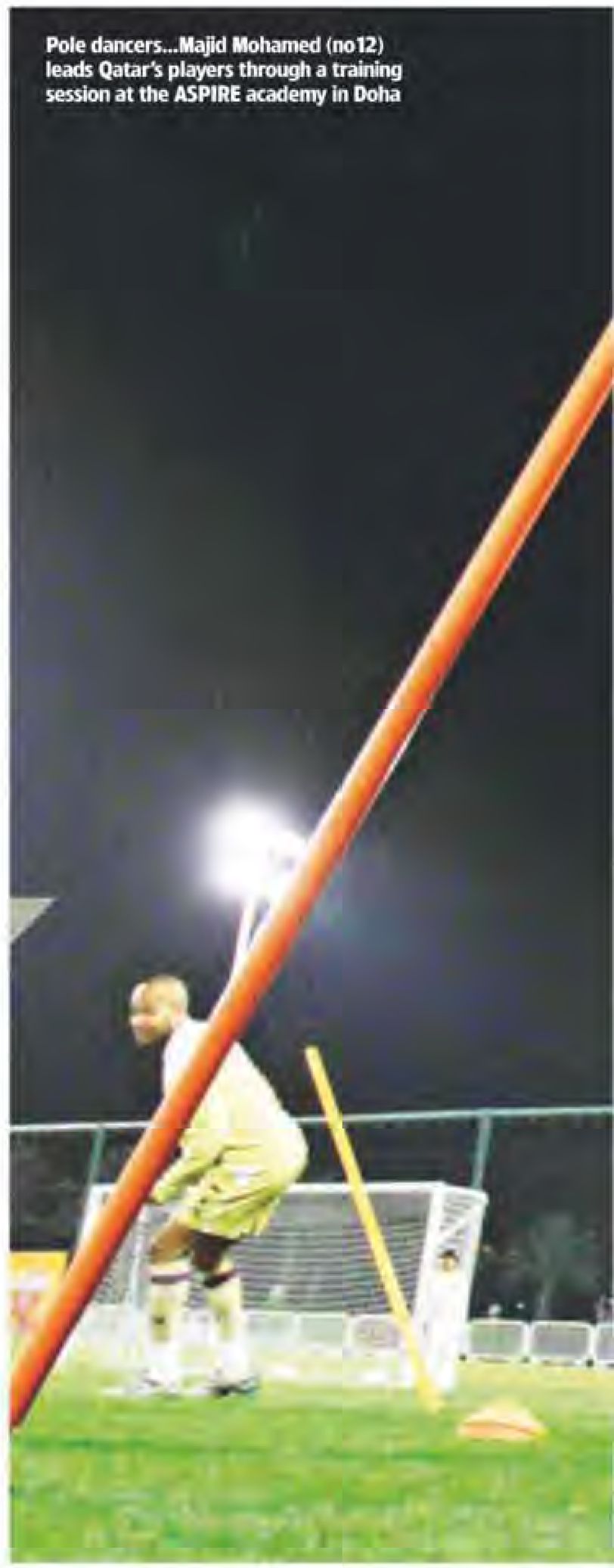
"Hopefully it will change because Al Sadd winning the Champions League was a really big deal. But it is also down to the players here. If you want to improve yourself as a player and as a human being then you work hard at it every day.

"In Europe you have 20 equal players at a club, but here you just have four professionals and the rest are Qataris."

And Kah does not believe the size of the population can be used as an excuse, adding: "Look at the Copa America; a tiny country like Uruguay can win that. The world is developing and that goes for football too. Qatar needs to take huge steps, but it will get there in the long run."

Adjusting to the local culture can be a big problem for foreign imports – as Paulo Silas, once a midfielder with Sampdoria, Sao Paulo and Brazil, and now coach of Al Arabi, found out in his first game.

"I whistled from the bench to get my players' attention and I was told very quickly that this is not done," he explains. "Other things, too, you have to learn – just as the Qataris need to learn about the international game, otherwise they



Pole dancers...Majid Mohamed (no12) leads Qatar's players through a training session at the ASPIRE academy in Doha

KEEPING UP WITH THE NEIGHBOURS

X = FIFA RANKING (as of November 2011) PLUS NUMBER OF WORLD CUP FINALS APPEARANCES

Storemags.com

will not survive out in the world of the World Cup."

Silas believes local clubs need to work harder to attract fans to the games but, once more, local culture

> "Qataris need to learn about the international game or they will not survive in the world of the World Cup"
> **Al Arabi's Brazilian coach Paulo Silas**

is a factor to consider because "women and children are not expected to come to football matches; it's not been something for them".

Silas adds: "When I was at Sao Paulo we had a director who had a toy factory. Every Saturday, the day before a game, he brought hundreds of toys to training to give to the kids who turned up. Of course, then the kids came back next day for the game and brought their brothers and fathers and uncles and cousins.

"They need this mentality here. They will get there, in time."

That phrase, "in time", is an intriguing one. Qatar has already created the administrative body to prepare for the 2022 World Cup finals. But in a football world which is still, more than a year on, coming to terms with the 2022 award, nothing would work to greater effect than a few big wins or star players.

"The Arab world has brought up fabulously talented players from Algeria through to Saudi, but the proper spotlight has not been shone on them," says Al Thawadi. "The World Cup will show everyone we have talented players who can compete with the rest of the world.

"We will see Qatar players in La Liga and the Premier League by 2022, and young budding players from Europe will be wanting to come here." WS

THE MAN WITH A MISSION

Shot at redemption...Lazaroni

Sebastiao Lazaroni was Brazil's coach at the 1990 World Cup finals in Italy and, as is usual in the country of his birth, he was sacked on the way home. His dismissal, however, owed not so much to the fact that his team were knocked out by arch-rivals Argentina but more to his insistence on playing a five-man back line. Now, aged 61, he is seeking World Cup redemption in a very different context.

Although he does not say as much, working with Qatar is something of a comedown from the days he bossed the likes of Careca, Romario and Dunga. But Lazaroni is a realist and is adaptable, having coached 19 clubs in nine countries plus three national teams.

Appointed last August to succeed Milovan Rajevac, he says: "My players give 100 per cent but need more experience of big games and of playing against different styles. They also need to understand the importance of what we are doing now.

"Every day I tell them: 'We are playing in the World Cup qualifying competition, we are playing to get to the finals in 2014'. Every day we need to do better and I believe they are trying to do that.

"Qatar have only two chances to qualify before they host the 2022 World Cup. There is now and 2018. That's not a lot. This is why this phase right now is so important. If we reach the next stage then the winners will go to Brazil. It can be that close.

"We will fight right to the end. It's not going to be easy but we have to try. Who knows?"

Stormnaas.com

TIM VICKERY
in Rio de Janeiro

Global ambition, local limitations

The Brasileirao showcased the best and worst of the domestic game

With its cast of stars and the drama stretching to the final day, the most recent national championship demonstrated that it is the league most likely to vie for global attention with the likes of the Premier League, La Liga and Serie A.

A new TV deal is likely to widen differences between the biggest clubs and the rest. Even so, Brazil is so vast, with so many massive clubs, that the potential exists to reconcile competitive balance with quality, and have a league with big-name players that is less predictable than the major domestic European competitions.

But there are still major problems to overcome – and the biggest must surely be the calendar. In 2011 everything went to the wire. All the main issues – the destination of the title, which teams qualified for the Libertadores Cup, who were relegated to the second division – were only defined on the final Sunday of the season. That meant the championship came to a conclusion with interest levels (and average crowds) on the rise.

In theory, appetites should be whetted for the 2012 Championship. But that does not kick off until May 20, by which time the momentum built up over the closing stages of 2011 will have dissipated. The next campaign will start "cold", throwing away one of the biggest advantages of the league format.

The stone in the shoe is the existence of the state championships, one for each of the country's 27 states, which run from January 22 until May 13. The format of these varies from state to state, but they all share the feature of wasting the big clubs' time in endless games against insignificant opponents.

A long league competition clearly needs a pause beforehand in order to start with a sense of event. The existence of the state tournaments prevents this from happening with the national championship. It also rules out any chance of a proper pre-season training period. And there are other effects which are gradually becoming more apparent.

Firstly, there is no space for Brazilian clubs to travel and participate in pre-season tournaments in Europe, Asia or the USA – occasions which could be lucrative in the short term and help the clubs to internationalise their brands in the long term.

Secondly, it is not possible for the championship to pause for FIFA dates. There is simply not enough time available for such a break in the action if 38 rounds are to be crammed in between May 20 and December 2. This is becoming increasingly problematic now that more domestically-based players are being called up to the national team.

For October's FIFA dates, Brazilian clubs had to do without key players at a vital moment in their campaign. In November, national coach Mano Menezes prudently decided not to call up any home-based players – which is hardly an ideal situation as he seeks to construct a cohesive side to take on the world in 2014.

"This is killing Brazilian football," says former national coach Carlos Alberto Parreira of the four-month state competitions. More people are coming round to the view that these tournaments should be scrapped, shortened or their format changed to a midweek cup. But serious impediments exist between thought and action.

> People are coming round to the view the state championships should be scrapped

The biggest is political. The power structure of the Brazilian game is based at state level on control of the small clubs. The big clubs could set up their own league, but this would need an act of will and an element of cohesion that will not come easily.

There is also a mental problem. The state championships have always been around, playing a vital role in the development of the game and many can not imagine life without them – especially as Brazilian football runs on local rivalries.

It could be, though, that this conservatism has been undermined by the final round of the 2011 Brasileirao. In recent years there have been cases of clubs appearing to be happy to lose end-of-season matches if it harmed the cause of their main rivals. To prevent this and ensure the competition's integrity, the last games of the 2011 campaign were given over to local derbies. A controversial measure, but it appears to have worked. No one took their foot off the pedal, there was drama to the end and the point has clearly been made that local rivalries can flourish outside the context of a state championship.

Learn the lesson, sort out the calendar and the Brazilian league can be a global attraction. WS

Final-day derby...Vasco da Gama's Bernardo gets in his shot despite the attentions of Flamengo's Williams

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STEVE MENARY
in Gibraltar

Awaiting recognition

UEFA has sat on the British Colony's membership application for more than a decade

Red wedge...Gibraltar line up before their win over England's C team

A chant of "We want UEFA" rings out from a 1,000-strong crowd at Gibraltar's Victoria Stadium. The British colony's side have just won 3-1 against England C – a side of young professionals drawn from clubs outside the Football League – and manager Allen Bula has fresh challenges in mind.

"Fabio Capello," reflects Bula. "I am a big admirer of Fabio Capello. I'd welcome him and England here in Gibraltar, or the chance to play at Wembley."

Gibraltar playing Capello's England might seem unlikely, but it could happen as European football's longest-running dispute comes to a head.

The Gibraltar Football Association (GFA) applied to join UEFA in 1999, but when neighbours Spain found out they threatened to pull all of their national and club sides from international competitions. UEFA reacted by changing the rules so that all new members had to be recognised as countries by the United Nations. Although that excluded Gibraltar and appeased Spain, UEFA changed the rules after the GFA had submitted their application and Gibraltar went to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), which ruled in their favour.

Shadow of the Rock...the Victoria Stadium is the site of Gibraltar's only football pitch

Gibraltar were briefly provisional members, but at a UEFA Congress in Dusseldorf, in January 2007, their application went to a vote and after furious Spanish lobbying just three countries voted in favour. The GFA went back to CAS and in August 2011 secured a second ruling that UEFA admit by Gibraltar as soon as possible.

Spain has offered a middle ground, but not one Gibraltarians will accept. "Spain were happy to offer Gibraltar a place in the Spanish league system, providing we drop the UEFA bid," says GFA committee member Dennis Beiso. "The feeling within our council is that we must do everything to secure our international future first."

The fact Gibraltar's only football pitch, the Victoria Stadium, is on land that is disputed by Britain and Spain, was given as a reason for excluding the GFA. But the Ministry of Defence is set to hand over a military playing field on the opposite side of the Rock that is definitely in Gibraltar.

The government plans to use the pitch for rugby and cricket but, as a last resort, could relocate the football pitch. For UEFA, which has not appealed against the latest CAS ruling, finding a way to keep out Gibraltar is getting harder than ever and legal action by the GFA is a possibility.

UEFA's position is exacerbated by a leaked 2010 FIFA report showing potential members classed in three categories: from countries not yet in the world body to politically sensitive places, including Gibraltar.

As a member of other international sporting bodies, the exclusion from football's elite rankles. "If you are a national hockey, cricket or basketball player, you get at least one international tournament; but not football," says Beiso.

Earlier this year, Gibraltar beat the Faroe Islands 3-0 and that result, plus the win over England C, has buoyed Bula's team. "We cannot win [against UEFA] unless we rock the boat," says Bula. "The boat has to be rocked all the time so that other countries find out what's going on."

While striker George Cabrera and left-back Joseph Chipolina play their club football in Spain, with Algeciras and San Roque respectively, Lee Casciaro – who scored against England C – has repeatedly turned down trials and offers to go professional, preferring the security of his MoD job, while Jason Pusey, who joined Atletico Madrid at 16, now works for a bookmaker.

Most Gibraltarians agree a player in a recognised foreign league would help confidence and midfielder Tony Hernandez recently had a six-week trial in England with Middlesbrough. Bula, however, has another plan.

Current GFA rules restrict national-team appearances to locally born players, but Bula would like to see that change so that he has an opportunity to call up his nephew. And while that might sound like nepotism, it is worth pointing out that his nephew is Danny Higginbotham, a Premier League veteran with Stoke City. WS

UEFA NEW BOYS SINCE 1990

Countries admitted to the UEFA ranks in the last 20 years

1990	Faroe Islands
1992	Armenia, Estonia, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine
1993	Belarus, Croatia, Moldova, Slovakia
1994	Azerbaijan, Israel, Macedonia, Slovenia
1996	Andorra
1998	Bosnia-Herzegovina
2002	Kazakhstan
2007	Montenegro

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MARK GLEESON

Peace breaks out under Gerets

Belgian coach has the national team pulling in one direction

Back in black...Gerets (far right) celebrates a Morocco victory over Algeria which helped their return to the finals

A decade ago, in the dusty confines of the athletes' village at Segou on the fringes of the Sahara desert, Morocco's team at the African Nations Cup finals in Mali was fraught with tension.

Fisticuffs in the camp saw Abdeslam Ouaddou sent home as a result of the differences between players from clubs in Morocco and a growing band of new discoveries from the country's vast diaspora across Europe.

That chasm has been used as an excuse for several unconvincing campaigns since 2002. But under Eric Gerets, Morocco now present a united front and have finally put those problems behind them as they seek to march back to a place among the continent's elite.

Peace has come in tandem with the emergence of some skilful – if somewhat unruly – talent, but the Belgium World Cup defender Gerets is managing the process and dealing with expectations with great aplomb.

Morocco may not have made the last Nations Cup tournament, in Angola, but they will be among the favourites for the event that kicks off on January 21.

While not exactly new pretenders in African football, the veterans of four World Cup finals appearances have only won the Nations Cup title once – and that was 38 years ago.

After experiencing success at club level in his native country, neighbouring Holland, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, Gerets is now relishing his first job in charge of a national team; one that is full of potential and brimming with precocious talent such as Ismail Aissati, Mbark Boussoufa and Adel Taarabt – who walked out on the team in June when he was not picked for the key qualifier against neighbours Algeria but was then brought back by a forgiving coach.

> This is a team full of potential, brimming with precocious talent

When Gerets arrived in Morocco he spoke about "winning titles and prizes" but was keen to make everyone aware that qualifying for the 2012 Nations Cup was his first priority. And this was done with some style in the latter stages – a run which included a 4-0 thumping of Algeria in June.

"After the game I was pulled over on the freeway for speeding," recalls the 57-year-old. "Almost immediately there were 15 police cars that rushed to the scene, all of them asking for autographs and pictures.

"I like Africa, the people live on the street. It reminds me of my youth. Since I've arrived the federation has become a lot better organised."

And having achieved his first mission statement, Gerets has now refocused his goal, adding: "Our aim is to win the Nations Cup." WS

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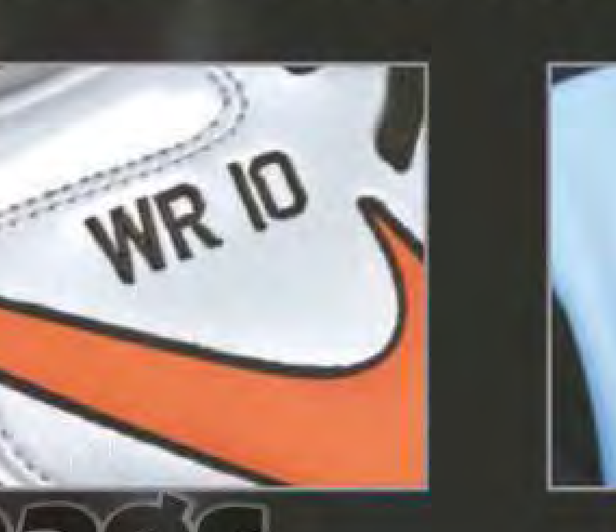

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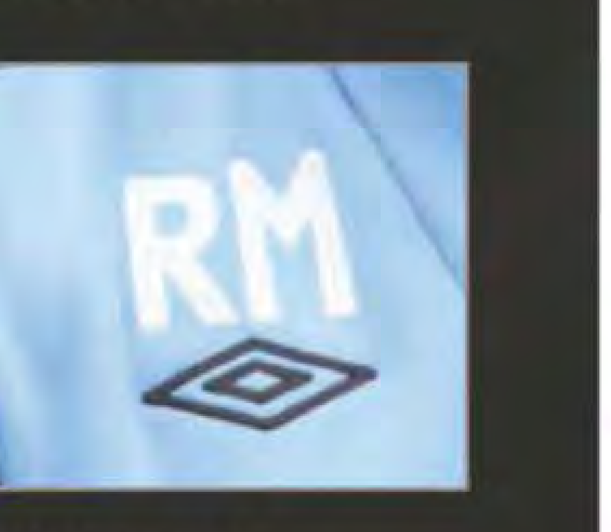

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PEOPLE OF 2011

Scandal ripping at the heart of FIFA... Barcelona taking club football to new heights... New talent emerging to re-energise the game... Recognition for some of football's brightest coaches... The past 12 months have produced some fascinating storylines and memorable events. Here are *World Soccer*'s key personalities of 2011

Strike force...Suarez (left) and Forlan

PEOPLE WS OF 2011 HEROES

DIEGO FORLAN
URUGUAY

The striker captained his country to victory in the Copa America, the major international tournament of 2011. In doing so, he emulated the achievements of his father Pablo, a substitute when Uruguay won the South American title in 1967, and his grandfather, who coached the victorious sides of 1959 and 1967.

RONALDINHO
FLAMENGO

The former World Player of the Year revived his career at Flamengo, having seemingly been on a downward spiral at Milan, where his partying took prominence over his playing. But a new, more disciplined Ronaldinho impressed in Rio de Janeiro, with his performances earning a recall to the Brazil national side and prompting discussion as to the possible role he can play at the 2014 World Cup. Still only 31, the dream is not over yet.

Recall...Ronaldinho

LUIS SUAREZ
URUGUAY

Scored the winning goal in the 2011 Copa America Final, having made a dramatic impact at Liverpool following his January 2011 transfer from Ajax.

CRISTIANO RONALDO
REAL MADRID

The clear winner of the 2011 ESM Golden Shoe with 40 goals in La Liga last season. This term he passed the landmark of 100 goals for Madrid.

Golden Shoe ...Ronaldo

JARI LITMANEN
HJK HELSINKI

The veteran former Ajax, Barcelona and Liverpool forward, is the only player to have played international football in four different decades. In 2011 he won his first Finnish league title with HJK at the age of 40.

EDINSON CAVANI
NAPOLI

Another member of Uruguay's Copa America squad, he was the star of Napoli's emergence as a new force in Serie A.

PEOPLE WS OF 2011 LANDMARKS

Euro goals...Raul

RAUL
SCHALKE

The veteran Spanish striker enjoyed an Indian summer in his career, winning the German Cup with Schalke and reaching the semi-finals of the Champions League. The two goals he scored against Internazionale in the quarter-finals took his total tally in UEFA competitions to 72, a new record.

AHMED HASSAN
EGYPT

The 36-year-old midfielder won his 178th cap in a 2-0 friendly defeat by Brazil in November, equalling the world appearance record set by Mexico's Claudio Suarez and Saudi Arabia's Mohamed Al Dayea.

Caps...Hassan

MARIO FRICK
LIECHTENSTEIN

Liechtenstein's record cap holder and goalscorer made his 100th international appearance in August.

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RADAMEL FALCAO
PORTO/ATLETICO MADRID

The Colombian was a prolific goalscorer in Porto's ground-breaking 2010-11 season. He scored 18 goals in the club's Europa League campaign, including the only goal of the Final against Braga in Dublin, and shared a total of 63 with strike partner Hulk. His £34million move to Atletico Madrid was one of the biggest transfers of summer 2011.

Big move ...Falcao

DAVID SILVA
MANCHESTER CITY

The outstanding player in the Premier League this autumn, although his performances for City were not enough to win him a regular place in Spain's starting XI.

GASTON PEZZUTI
ATLETICO NACIONAL

The Argentinian goalkeeper saved three penalties against La Equidad in the shoot-out that secured the Colombian apertura title for his club.

ERIC ABIDAL
BARCELONA

In March, the French defender underwent emergency surgery after a tumour was discovered on his liver. By May, he had made a remarkable recovery, playing the full 90 minutes against Manchester United in the Champions League Final at Wembley. He finished the match wearing the captain's armband and was the first Barca player to lift the trophy.

Comeback ...Abidal

VILLAINS

BULAT CHAGAEV
NEUCHATEL XAMAX OWNER

The controversial Chechen businessman turned the Swiss Super League club into, according to one shareholder, "the laughing stock of Switzerland, even of Europe". His despotic management methods led to the departure of five coaches in as many months, with many other staff also fired.

Boss... Chagaev

ASAMOAH GYAN
AL AIN

The 26-year-old Ghana international striker quit Premier League club Sunderland and instead agreed a lucrative deal with UAE club Al Ain, reportedly for four times his salary in England.

KEVIN MUSCAT
MELBOURNE VICTORY

The former Australia defender announced his retirement from top-flight football after receiving an eight-match ban for an horrendous challenge on Melbourne Heart's Adrian Zahra.

Banned...Muscat

BYRON MORENO
FORMER REFEREE

The Ecuadorian, who earned notoriety in 2002 when he officiated the World Cup finals match between South Korea and Italy in Daejeon, was jailed in the United States for heroin smuggling. In the 2002 game, which the Koreans won in controversial circumstances in extra time, Moreno sent off Italy's Francesco Totti and wrongly disallowed an Italy goal for offside.

FLUSHED OUT OF FIFA

JOAO HAVELANGE
FIFA HONORARY PRESIDENT

For almost four decades, the 95-year-old Brazilian has been a colossal figure in football politics, overseeing FIFA for 24 years as president before handing over to Sepp Blatter in 1998 and taking up an honorary position.

However, his resignation from the International Olympic Committee, officially on health grounds, two days before he was due to face an ethics investigation, was interpreted by many observers as an admission that he was guilty of receiving bribes from ISL, FIFA's former marketing partner.

Unfortunately for Havelange, the ISL long-running scandal, which is set to produce further revelations in the coming weeks and months, will be his lasting legacy at FIFA.

Resignation...Havelange

Lessons to be learned...Warner

JACK WARNER
EX-CONCACAF PRESIDENT

The former teacher was the all-powerful leader of the North, Central American and Caribbean region, proudly boasting of the block of 35 votes he could deliver in FIFA presidential elections, until events caught up with him in 2011. He quit all his football posts before he could be punished by FIFA in the wake of the Caribbean Football Union scandal.

MOHAMED BIN HAMMAM
EX-ASIAN FOOTBALL CONFEDERATION PRESIDENT

The Qatari was banned from all football activity by the FIFA ethics committee following the bribery scandal that engulfed his campaign to unseat Sepp Blatter as president. Members of the Caribbean Football Union were offered bribes of $40,000 (£25,000) following a meeting with Bin Hammam in Trinidad.

A year ago Bin Hammam was celebrating after he had masterminded Qatar's unlikely success in winning the right to host the 2022 World Cup. Twelve months later, his reputation is in tatters.

RICARDO TEIXEIRA
BRAZILIAN FA PRESIDENT

The former son-in-law of Joao Havelange ended the year mired in controversy. He faced allegations that he was the recipient of bribes from FIFA's former marketing partner ISL. He stepped down as president of the 2014 World Cup organising committee and was under increasing pressure to relinquish his membership of the FIFA executive committee.

Bribery allegations ...Teixeira

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WINNING COACHES

RUDI GARCIA
LILLE

A former midfielder with the French club, he saw his favoured brand of attacking football deliver their first league championship since 1954.

OLE GUNNAR SOLSKJAER
MOLDE

Years of observing games from the bench at Manchester United paid dividends for the rookie coach, who won the championship with former club Molde in his first season back in Norway.

JURGEN KLOPP
BORUSSIA DORTMUND

Charismatic young coach whose modern approach and attention to detail brought Bundesliga title success with a talented young squad. Recently signed a contract extension but is the favourite to succeed Joachim Low as Germany's national boss.

Charisma...Klopp

Cup winner ...Zaccheroni

ALEX FERGUSON
MANCHESTER UNITED

In the year before he turned 70, the Scot won his 12th league crown with United and celebrated 25 years in charge at Old Trafford. The championship was the club's 19th, setting a new English record.

ALBERTO ZACCHERONI
JAPAN

The Italian coached Japan to Asian Cup success less than a year after taking charge of the national side.

ANTONIO CONTE
JUVENTUS

The former Juve midfielder had not previously coached in Serie A – having steered Bari and Siena to Serie B titles in 2009 and 2011 respectively – but he returned to Turin to steer his old club to the top of the table.

ANDRE VILLAS-BOAS
PORTO/CHELSEA

The 34-year-old protégé of Bobby Robson and Jose Mourinho enjoyed a remarkable first season at Porto, winning a Portuguese league, cup and Europa League treble, prompting Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich to pay the £12million release clause in his contract.

Champions...Tabarez with Sebastian Eguren and Alvaro Pereira in Argentina

COPA AMERICA

"EL MAESTRO" OF MONTEVIDEO

OSCAR TABAREZ
URUGUAY

A year on from guiding Uruguay to the World Cup semi-finals in South Africa, Tabarez guided "*La Celeste*" to a record-breaking 15th Copa America title and the country's first success in the competition for 16 years.

The man known as "*El Maestro*" (the teacher) demonstrated the benefits of long-term planning. The former coach of Milan and Cagliari has been boss of Uruguay's national side since 2006 – his second spell in charge, having also coached them at the 1990 World Cup.

His achievements were recognised by *World Soccer* readers, who voted him a close second to Pep Guardiola in the ballot for Manager of the Year.

UNLUCKY FOR SOME

RUUD GULLIT
TEREK GROZNY

Lasted just five months as coach of the Russian league side based in Chechnya. He left with the team bottom of the league and with controversial owner Ramzan Kadyrov complaining that the former Holland forward had been "thinking about bars and discotheques" and not football.

Party's over ...Gullit

JUAN JOSE LOPEZ
RIVER PLATE

The former River Plate midfielder oversaw the team's relegation to the second tier for the first time in the club's history.

RALF RANGNICK
SCHALKE

The bespectacled former trainee teacher was in charge of Schalke for six months (from March to September), having quit Hoffenheim in January in protest at the sale of Luiz Gustavo to Bayern Munich. He earned plaudits for his honesty after stepping down as Schalke boss, citing stress and mental exhaustion.

SERGIO BATISTA
ARGENTINA

A World Cup winner as a player in 1986, he paid the price for Argentina's unsuccessful Copa America campaign in which the host nation lost on penalties to Uruguay in the quarter-finals. He was fired 12 months after succeeding Diego Maradona.

GIAN PIERO GASPERINI
INTERNAZIONALE

Sacked by Inter in September after just three months in charge of the 2010 European champions. His continued preference for playing with a back three proved disastrous and the club turned to Claudio Ranieri.

CARLO ANCELOTTI
CHELSEA

Won the Premier League and FA Cup double in his first season, but the following term he still became the sixth manager to leave Stamford Bridge since Roman Abramovich bought the club.

Double trouble ...Ancelotti

WORLD MANAGER OF THE YEAR

PEP GUARDIOLA

BARCELONA

In Frank Rijkaard's final season in charge, Barcelona finished third in La Liga, 18 points behind Real Madrid. Worse still, they were forced into handing their rivals a humiliating guard of honour because the *clasico* fell the week after Madrid clinched the title. They had, in the words of Rafa Marquez, let themselves go. They needed a change.

When former Barca midfielder Guardiola was chosen as Rijkaard's successor, there were some who were fearful. Sure, he had been successful in charge of the B team, but he had no experience. The Catalan press were crying out for a bigger-name coach – Jose Mourinho, to be precise. So when Guardiola's side lost and drew their first two league games, the pressure built.

But some were sure. As Xavi told *World Soccer*: "Pep is incredible. When they signed him I said: 'Madre mia, we're going to be flying.' I swear it. He's *pesado* [heavy-going, hard working]. He's a perfectionist. He demands so much from himself. And that pressure that he puts on himself, those demands are contagious."

Guardiola showed toughness, forcing Deco, Ronaldinho and, eventually, Samuel Eto'o out. He changed the approach to training. Andres Iniesta and Xavi recall reporting for pre-season hardly believing their eyes; they had not seen sessions so intense. Guardiola demanded discipline. Zlatan Ibrahimovic moans in his recent autobiography that Barca's players were a "sect" with blind faith in their coach, schoolboys who did what teacher said. Guardiola would take that as a compliment.

There was a new stress too: on positioning, on intelligence, on movement. Tactically, the analysis is astonishingly precise. Before every game, Guardiola locks himself in a small, dark office and goes over the videos of his rivals. And during that time there is a moment "when I just know".

The evidence suggests that largely he does indeed know. Guardiola has always known for all the style, identity and the plaudits for the way in which Barcelona play, his team had to win. He is fond of repeating that if they were unsuccessful the eulogies would cease and battle commence. So far, though, they have been almost ridiculously successful. In Guardiola's first season he won the treble, last term it was La Liga and the Champions League – for the second time in three seasons.

He has won the league every year. In total he has won 12 of a possible 15 trophies. These are the most successful years in Barcelona's history and they owe much of it to Guardiola.

Sid Lowe

Intense...Barcelona's players have bought in to their coach's philosophy and the results speak for themselves

TEAM OF THE YEAR

BARCELONA

SPANISH AND EUROPEAN CHAMPIONS

The profile of Sandro Rosell has never been higher. Speaking from his lofty perch as president of the Champions League and La Liga winners, he is demanding that all Europe's mainstream leagues slash their memberships from 20 clubs to 16 "in the near future" as part of a scheme to rebalance European club competition.

The clubs, says Rosell, who is also vice-president of the European Club Association (ECA), want a cut in national team dates to facilitate an expansion of the Champions League. Each country would double its representation. Thus England, Spain and Germany would go from four clubs to eight, Italy from three to six, and so on.

Rosell even envisages a "worst-case scenario" by which clubs break away to create their own league, revealing: "We want a bigger Champions League, but to increase doesn't necessarily mean to do it with UEFA. We want to have the Champions League under the UEFA umbrella, but we want UEFA to hear our demands.

"ECA is asking for more revenues, governance, transparency, insurance, etc, because this is what we think is fair. If UEFA and ECA reach an agreement then that's good for both parties. But we would like to increase the Champions League – and if not, then ECA is entitled to organise their own champions' competition by themselves."

A key factor in enlarging the Champions League would be cutting both the national team dates and easing fixture pressure within domestic competition.

Unstoppable...Barcelona celebrate beating Manchester United at Wembley

Rosell says: "Reducing from 20 to 16 clubs will not be easy, but we really think it has to happen to give more space and air to our players. But the freed-up dates are not for the federations but for the clubs to organise friendly games or to increase the European competitions.

"We would like to have [this] Champions League with more teams which means that one day Barcelona can play Manchester United in the quarter-finals on a Saturday or Sunday, for instance. This is what we are looking for. We will not liberate dates for the national teams at all. They have too many dates already and have to reduce them [because] the clubs pay the players and the national associations use the players without paying the clubs."

Rosell has come a long way from his childhood days as a ball boy at Camp Nou, but perhaps it's his lifelong relationship with Barcelona which leaves him open to accusations of tunnel vision.

He recalls: "For many kids in Catalonia, becoming a member of Barcelona is part of our culture and we live with it all our lives. It's much more than a club. It's part of our personal story, our daily lives. I became a member like my father and grandfather; now my daughters are members. I became a member at eight, my father became general manager and I became a ballboy for my heroes: Hugo Sotil, Johan Cruyff, Charly Rexach, Juan Manuel."

He says Barcelona will never play on Saturday lunchtimes for the sake of the Asian market because "this is a time for the family to sit down together for lunch".

This patrician approach sits oddly with Rosell's tough negotiation for the multi-zillion Qatar Foundation sponsorship and his expectations about how the rest of Europe's leagues and clubs will change their ways to suit his vision.

> Barca will never play at lunchtime on a Saturday for the sake of the Asian market because "this is a time for the family to sit down together for lunch"

The plan, he says, is "to be seen by everybody as not only the best club on the field but also in social, solidarity cultural and real estate matters; to have the best arena in the world, the best youth academy...and to project the very best of human values".

Keir Radnedge

Grand scheme...Rosell wants domestic leagues cut so the Champions League can expand

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POLITICIANS AND POWER-BROKERS

SEPP BLATTER
FIFA PRESIDENT

The 75-year-old endured the most difficult 12 months in the history of the world governing body. He began the year under fire for the controversial decision to award the 2022 World Cup to Qatar and ended it with calls for his resignation following explosive comments about racism in a TV interview. In between, he was re-elected to the presidency unopposed after a bribery scandal forced his challenger, Mohamed Bin Hammam, to pull out of the race. Blatter now faces the task of re-inventing himself as an anti-corruption crusader, even though stories continue to emerge of corruption taking place on his watch at FIFA.

Difficult...Blatter

CHUCK BLAZER
CONCACAF GENERAL SECRETARY

The larger-than-life American stepped down from his role at CONCACAF in the aftermath of the scandal that forced the resignation of Jack Warner as FIFA vice-president and CONCACAF president. Blazer reported members of the Caribbean Football Union to FIFA for accepting bribes from Bin Hammam at a meeting facilitated by Warner. In retaliation, documents were leaked to the media which showed Blazer had been paid millions of dollars in commission for deals negotiated on behalf of CONCACAF.

Whistle-blower...Blazer

KARL-HEINZ RUMMENIGGE
BAYERN MUNICH VICE-PRESIDENT

The former West Germany striker, now president of the European Club Association, stepped up his campaign for clubs to receive a greater share of the spoils from FIFA and UEFA competitions.

City backer...Mansour

SHEIKH MANSOUR
MANCHESTER CITY OWNER

Middle Eastern money has poured into carefully targeted European clubs such as Paris Saint-Germain and Malaga. But nowhere has its influence been felt so strongly yet as at Manchester City. Sheikh Mansour, a member of Abu Dhabi's ruling family, has spent more than half a billion pounds on transfer fees and salaries since buying the Premier League club in September 2008. In return for his investment, City were the only unbeaten side in the English top flight going into December. Despite the impending introduction of UEFA's Financial Fairplay regulations, there appears to be no let-up in City's spending plans.

MICHEL PLATINI
UEFA PRESIDENT

The head of European football's governing body continued with his plans to implement Financial Fairplay on the game and remained the most high-profile critic of video technology. The 56-year-old was re-elected unopposed for a second term and has been widely mentioned as the likely successor to Sepp Blatter in 2015. However, the Frenchman refuses to be drawn on the issue and doubts remain over his long-term ambitions.

SULEYMAN KERIMOV
ANZHI MAKHACHKALA OWNER

The Russian billionaire purchased Anzhi in January and lavished cash on his new investment. Roberto Carlos and Samuel Eto'o – the latter's salary believed to be £6.5million a year – were the biggest names signed as part of a transfer strategy designed to raise the profile of the club based in the southern region of Dagestan, which has been troubled by civil war and unrest in recent years.

Profile...Kerimov

NOTABLE RETIREMENTS

MARTIN PALERMO
BOCA JUNIORS

The veteran striker, nicknamed *El Loco*, called time on his career one year on from his appearance for Argentina at the World Cup finals in South Africa. He had been recalled to the national side after more than a decade away from the international scene, having famously missed three penalties in one match at the 1999 Copa America.

Boca icon...Palermo

New role...Ronaldo

RONALDO
CORINTHIANS

The Brazilian World Cup winner and former World Player of the year called it a day in February after the physical demands at the top level became too much for him at the age of 34. "I've been defeated by my own body," said the player who suffered a serious knee injury in November 1999 from which he never fully recovered. He has now accepted a request from beleaguered Brazil FA boss Ricardo Teixeira to accept a position on Brazil's 2014 World Cup organising committee and will act as a figurehead for his country's World Cup preparations.

FABIO CANNAVARO
AL AHLI

Italy's 2010 World Cup-winning captain quit in June at the age of 37, while 12 months into a two-year deal with Al Ahli in Dubai, saying: "I'm very sad. Football is everything for me in my life."

KASEY KELLER
SEATTLE SOUNDERS

A record crowd of 64,410 turned out to see the former USA national team goalkeeper play his last home game in Major League Soccer for Seattle against San Jose Earthquakes. Keller won 102 caps and also played in Europe for Millwall, Leicester City, Rayo Vallecano, Tottenham Hotspur, Borussia Monchengladbach and Fulham.

Popular...Keller

YOUNG PLAYER OF THE YEAR

NEYMAR
SANTOS

Although Santos were never in contention for the 2011 national championship – their priorities being elsewhere in the build-up to December's Club World Cup in Japan – Neymar swept the board in the Brazilian end-of-season awards handed out by the country's media.

The teenager, who turns 20 in February, picked up Brazilian player of the year awards from *Placar* magazine and CBF/Globo TV. He was also voted the best player in the 2011 Libertadores Cup.

Not only did Neymar end the year with a clutch of awards, he also enhanced his bank balance by signing a new contract with Santos.

The new deal ties the youngster to the club until 2015 and guarantees him a 50 per cent pay rise, reportedly rewarding him to the tune of £600,000 every month. This salary is being heavily subsidised by a state sponsorship deal involving the Post Office and Bank of Brazil, with Santos believed to be paying only a fifth of his wages.

The new contract has raised hopes that Neymar will now stay in Brazil with Santos until the 2014 World Cup. However, Real Madrid and Barcelona both remain hopeful that they can persuade him and his family to move to Europe before then.

European fans will get the chance to see Neymar in the summer, irrespective of whether a transfer is arranged. Brazil's Olympic side is likely to be built around his considerable talents and that will give David Beckham – if he makes the Great Britain squad – some competition as the star attraction of the London 2012 football tournament.

OBITUARIES

JIMMY ADAMSON
Burnley manager and member of England staff at 1962 World Cup, aged 82.

FLORIAN ALBERT
Hungary forward, 1967 European Footballer of the Year, aged 70.

THEYAB AWANA
UAE international famous for scoring a back-heel penalty, aged 21 (car crash).

WIEL COERVER
Dutch coach, inventor of the Coerver Method coaching technique, aged 86.

ADRIAN ESCUDERO
All-time top goalscorer for home-town club Atletico Madrid, aged 83.

DANNY FISZMAN
Arsenal director and key shareholder, aged 66.

VALENTIN IVANOV
Soviet Union forward, joint-top scorer at 1962 World Cup and 1960 European Championship, aged 76.

TOMISLAV IVIC
Croatian who won numerous domestic leagues across Europe, earning a reputation as a master tactician, aged 77.

Master tactician...Ivic

LEO KIRCH
German TV mogul, aged 84.

BORA KOSTIC
Red Star Belgrade's all-time top scorer, aged 80.

NAT LOFTHOUSE
Bolton Wanderers and England forward, nicknamed the "Lion of Vienna", aged 85.

THE NEXT GENERATION

The emerging young players who are tipped to be contenders for the game's top awards in the not-too-distant future

EDEN HAZARD
LILLE

The Belgium midfielder was the star of his club side's Ligue 1 triumph. Lille are resigned to losing the 20-year-old to a major European power in the summer, but will expect a fat fee for a player who is under contract until 2015.

MARIO GOTZE
BORUSSIA DORTMUND

The Bundesliga champions have placed a £30million price tag on the prodigious talent. With Arsenal seemingly prepared to go most of the way (£25m) a bidding war may result for the 19-year-old midfielder who is expected to have an important role in Germany's Euro 2012 squad.

MARCO REUS
BORUSSIA MONCHENGLADBACH

The 22-year-old midfielder has been linked with an imminent switch to Bayern Munich. Along with Gotze, the youngster is another selection option for Germany coach Joachim Low.

PAULO HENRIQUE GANSO
SANTOS

The fuss over Neymar has deflected attention from the progress of Santos team-mate Ganso. The 22-year-old playmaker has been compared to the late Socrates, who said Ganso was the greatest talent to come out of Brazil in the past decade. Injuries have probably delayed a move to Europe, but Milan lead several clubs still keen.

JACK RODWELL
EVERTON

The 20-year-old midfielder made his England debut in November with a strong performance that gave manager Fabio Capello a potential selection headache ahead of next summer's Euro 2012, when Jack Wilshere and Steven Gerrard are expected to be fit again.

CHRISTIAN ERIKSEN
AJAX

The most talented Danish player since Michael Laudrup helped Ajax to the Dutch title, he played a key role in Denmark's successful Euro 2012 qualification. A lucrative move to Spain or England beckons for the 19-year-old midfielder.

THIAGO ALCANTARA
BARCELONA

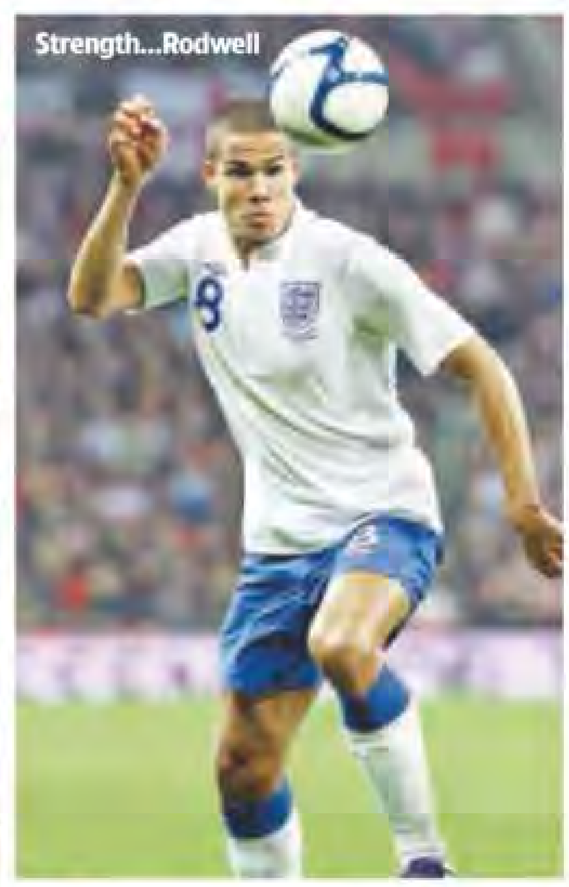
After Xavi (aged 30), Iniesta (27), and Cesc Fabregas (24), the brilliant 20-year-old Barcelona midfielder, star of Spain's 2010 Euro Under-21 championship triumph, is expected to lead the next generation for club and country.

Major league bound...Hazard

Bayern link...Reus

Playmaker...Ganso

Star...Alcantara


Strength...Rodwell

Laudrup quality ...Eriksen

£30m tag...Gotze

Bolton hero...Lofthouse

DENNIS MARSHALL
Costa Rica international, aged 25 (car crash).

NAOKI MATSUDA
Japan defender who played at 2002 World Cup, aged 34 (cardiac arrest).

COEN MOULIJN
Winger and member of Feyenoord's 1970 European Cup-winning side, aged 73.

LADISLAV NOVAK
Czechoslavakia defender, 1962 World Cup losing finalist, aged 79.

DEAN RICHARDS
Defender with Bradford City, Wolves, Southampton and Tottenham Hotspur, aged 36.

SOCRATES
Captain of 1982 Brazil World Cup side, aged 57.

JOSE SORIANO
Last surviving member of the legendary River Plate team of the 1940s, aged 93.

GARY SPEED
Leeds United, Everton, Newcastle United, Bolton Wanderers and Wales midfielder, who later managed Sheffield United and Wales, aged 42.

JAN VAN BEVEREN
PSV Eindhoven and Holland international goalkeeper, aged 63.

ERNIE WALKER
Former Scottish FA secretary, aged 82.

YOON KI-WON
South Korean goalkeeper implicated in a domestic match-fixing scandal, aged 24 (suicide).

Stadiums

For Barcelona, he is breaking goalscoring records and winning multiple trophies. Yet for Argentina, *World Soccer*'s Player of the Year for 2011 remains an enigma. By Joel Richards

WORLD PLAYER OF THE YEAR

LIONEL MESSI

BARCELONA

One coach had to warn his players against asking for an autograph, while one referee leapt at the opportunity provided by the coin toss to grab a photo with him. Meanwhile, marketing departments across the globe covet him, opposing managers scratch their heads at how to stop him and, rather than make him a player of the year, *Time* magazine sees him as Person of the Year.

As his celebrity continues to rise, so too does Lionel Messi's sheer level of achievement. In 2011 he won the Spanish League and Champions League, and was named best player in both competitions. He won the Spanish and European Super Cups, and in the process of collecting yet more winners' medals, his scoring ratio surpassed the goal-a-game mark.

At the age of just 24 he has amassed an astonishing CV, with the standout moments from an impressive list of individual and collective honours being the five La Liga-winning sides he has been part of and the two Champions League Final victories he played in.

So, as he is crowned World Player of the Year again, just what else does Messi have left to achieve? How much more is there to come?

Well, in his homeland not everyone is

Box of tricks...Messi's inventiveness has made him an iconic figure to the Barcelona faithful

TIMELINE: EVERY MATCH, EVERY MINUTE, EVERY GOAL

Aug 17, 2005 – his international debut ends almost as soon as it begins when he is shown a red card in under two minutes of coming on as a substitute in a friendly away to Hungary.

KEY
- **WC** World Cup qualifier
- **WCF** World Cup Finals
- **CA** Copa America
- **CWC** Club World Cup
- **CL** UEFA Champions League
- **US** UEFA Super Cup
- **SC** Spanish Cup
- **SSC** Spanish Super Cup

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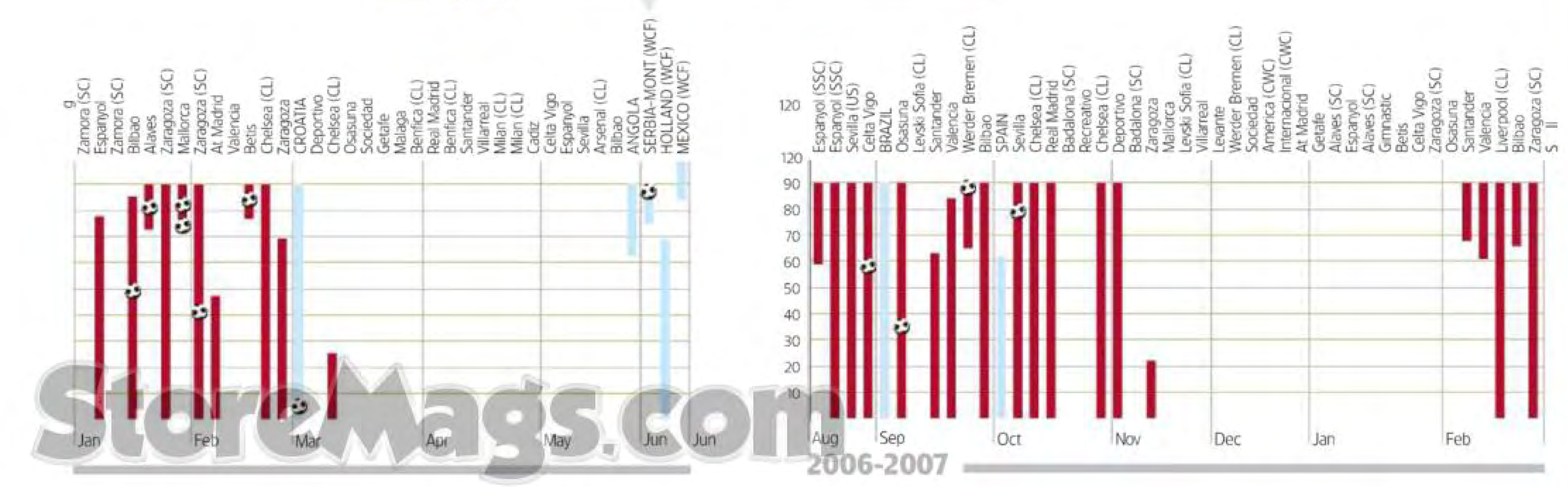
Jun 16, 2006 – scores his first goal for Argentina with an 88th-minute strike in the 6-0 thrashing of Serbia & Montenegro in the World Cup.



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King of Europe...Messi leaves Viktoria Plzen keeper Marek Cech and defender David Limbersky floundering during a Champions League clash

fully convinced yet, and they point to a glaring gap in that impressive list of honours. They believe that Messi has still to deliver for his country.

"Messi is the best player in the world," said Argentina coach Alejandro Sabella in his defence recently.

"He plays extraordinarily well for Barcelona, so then when he plays just well for Argentina it seems like he is underperforming."

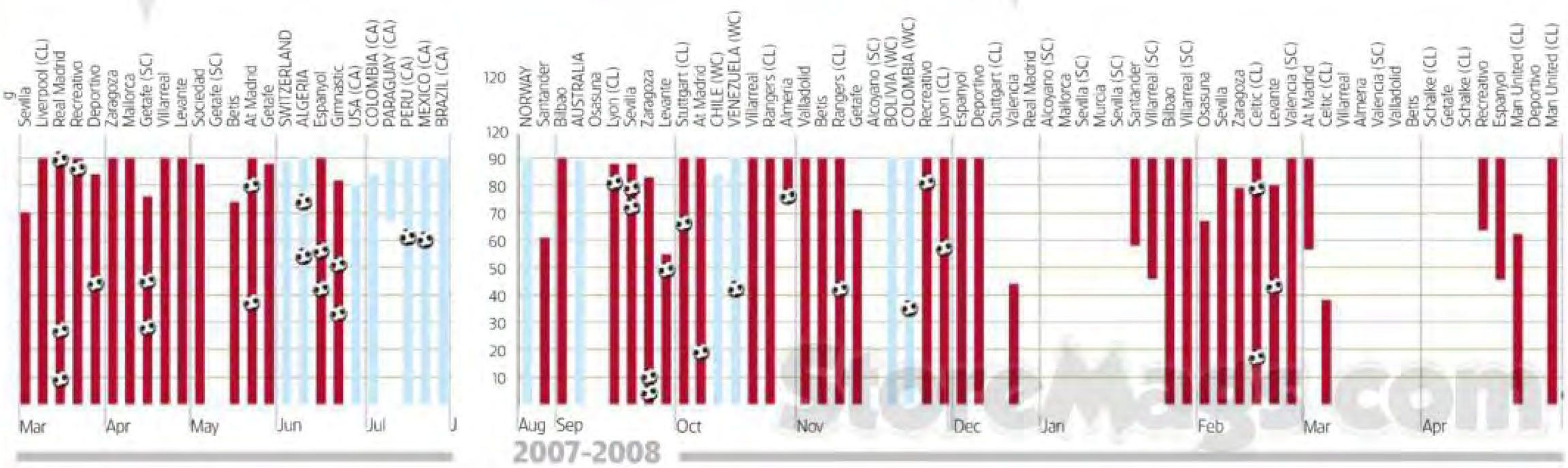
The most tangible, and indeed impressive, aspect of Messi's game is, of course, his scoring record. Since Frank Rijkaard handed him his debut with the Barcelona first team in 2004, his strike rate has continued to improve every year, culminating with a staggering 53 goals in 55 matches by the end of the 2010-11 season.

In the current campaign he is averaging better than a goal every game and may well reach Cesar Rodriguez's club record of 235 goals by the end of this term. Factoring in an assist for every two goals that he scores, his form is

Two down...Messi has collected a couple of Ballon d'Or trophies. Time for another?

Apr 30, 2007 – Messi scores a wonderful solo goal in the semi-final first leg of the Spanish Cup to help Barcelona beat Getafe 5-2. Rested for the second leg, Barca lost 6-5 on aggregate.

Dec 15, 2007 – after a good start to the season, Messi leaves the field injured at the Mestalla Stadium. He scored just four more goals during an injury-hit campaign.



Heir apparent...Messi with Maradona

nothing short of sensational. But the contrast between his displays for Argentina and those for Barcelona is stark. For example, his overall strike rate at club level is 0.71; for Argentina, with 19 goals from 66 games, that rate drops to 0.28.

In October, his finish against Chile in a World Cup qualifier, poking in Gonzalo Higuain's through ball, was his first goal in 16 competitive matches for Argentina. Alarmingly, that spell included the 2010 World Cup and the 2011 Copa America. In both competitions Argentina lost at the quarter-final stage, and Messi became an easy target.

Debt to Barcelona

The more nationalist sectors of supporters and the media in Argentina have questioned his commitment to the national side, suggesting he feels more Spanish than Argentinian, having emigrated at such an early age. His debt to Barcelona is evident as the club paid for the medical treatment he needed as a teenager when both Newell's Old Boys and River Plate refused. But instead of displaying little interest in turning out for his country, if anything Messi often appears to try too hard, attempting to resolve situations alone. There are also other broader issues that shed light on why his performance levels differ with Barcelona and Argentina.

Watch out...Higuain, Javier Pastore, Messi and Gabriel Milito (left to right) are helpless as Argentina lose on penalties in the 2011 Copa America

> Nationalists question his commitment to Argentina

One comparison is the quality of the squad that surrounds him. The current Barcelona team is widely considered to be one of the greatest club sides of all time. In the 55-player shortlist for their World XI, the footballers' association FIFPro included an entire Barcelona starting XI, with Victor Valdes, Dani Alves, Carles Puyol, Gerard Pique, Eric Abidal, Andres Iniesta, Xavi, Sergio Busquets, Cesc Fabregas and David Villa lining up alongside Messi.

Representing Argentina, along with Messi, was Manchester City's Sergio Aguero.

While Barcelona had three players in the top five of *World Soccer*'s World Player award – Messi, Xavi and Andres

FACT FILE

Lionel Andres Messi

Nationality
Argentinian

Age
24 (24.06.87)

Place of birth
Rosario, Argentina

Height
5ft 6½in (1.69m)

Position
Forward

Teams
Barcelona
2004-present (290 games/205 goals)*

Argentina
2005-present (67 games/19 goals)*

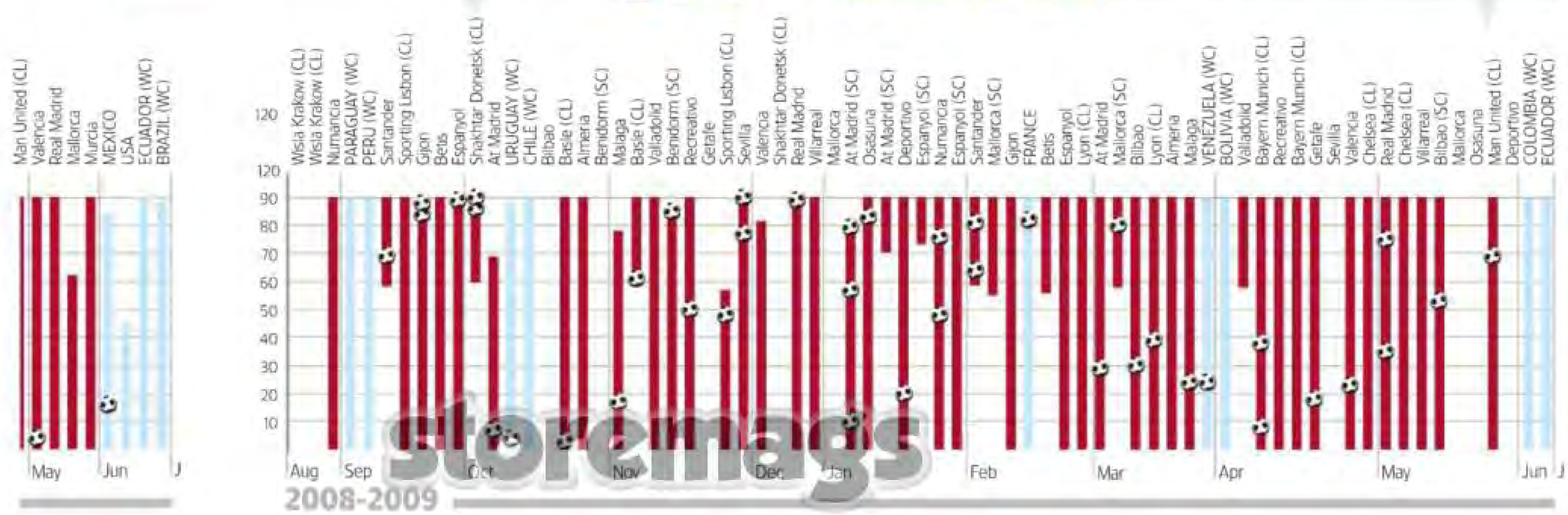
Honours
Barcelona
Champions League 2009, 2011; Club World Cup 2009; UEFA Super Cup 2009, 2011; Spanish league 2005, 2006, 2009, 2010, 2011; Spanish Cup 2009; Spanish Super Cup 2005, 2006, 2009, 2010, 2011

Argentina
Olympic Games 2008; Under-20 World Cup 2005

** up to and including 27.11.11*

Oct 1, 2008 – a dramatic finale as Messi scores twice in the last three minutes to beat Shakhtar Donetsk 2-1 in a Champions League group game.

May 27, 2009 – heads past Edwin Van der Sar to secure Barcelona's third European Cup, with a 2-0 win against Manchester United in Rome.



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Crowded out...Messi struggles as Bolivia hold Argentina to a 1-1 draw in a World Cup qualifier in November 2011

Iniesta – Messi was the only Argentinian in the top 10.

The shortlist for the FIFA Ballon d'Or offered a similar trend, with seven Barca players put forward with Messi, and again only himself and Aguero flying the flag for Argentina.

These nominations lend weight to the views held in Argentina that the country is not producing the same number of first-class players as it once did. Indeed, there are very few positions for which there are clear-cut first-choice players for Argentina.

Individual brilliance, however, is only part of the story. Edinson Cavani and Luis Suarez were the only Uruguayans in the FIFPro list, but Uruguay are the top side in South America right now, and indeed one of the best in the world, with Oscar Tabarez having developed a finely tuned team. When asked about his success after this year's Copa America triumph, Tabarez said he had simply copied Jose Pekerman's blueprint for developing the youth-team players.

Pekerman was one of Messi's early mentors. Having produced spectacular results with the Argentina under-20s, he took over the national team in 2004 and a year later he handed Messi his full debut – it is merely anecdotal that Messi lasted less than a minute on the pitch after receiving a red card.

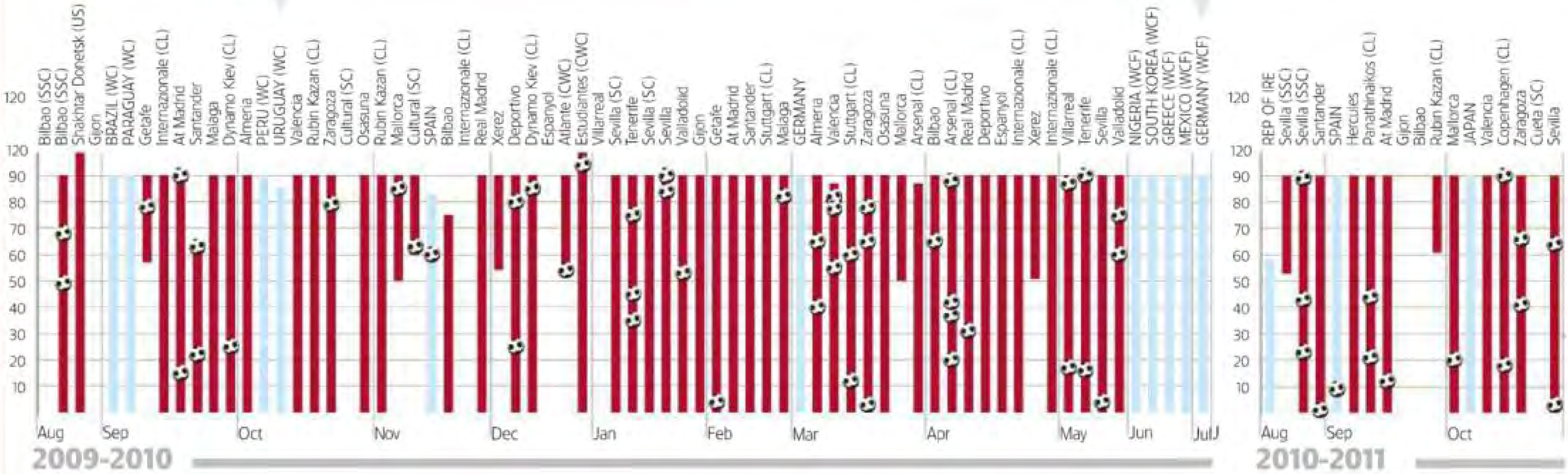
Pekerman soon left, however, and since then Messi has worked under Alfio Basile, Diego Maradona, Sergio Batista and now Sabella. From Basile's devotion

Keeping the faith ...Sabella

> "Whenever he has the ball you expect something to happen"
> Argentina coach Alejandro Sabella

Oct 14, 2009 – in a make-or-break World Cup qualifier, Argentina defeat Uruguay 1-0 in Montevideo to secure their place in the 2010 finals in South Africa.

Jul 3, 2010 – consoled by coach Diego Maradona as Argentina crash out of the World Cup finals, losing 4-0 to Germany in Cape Town.



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Early mentor... Pekerman put Messi in the national team

to playing with a classic *enganche* (playmaker), to Maradona's back line of four central defenders, to Batista's aim to replicate the Barcelona system – but not push his full-backs past the halfway line - there has neither been continuity in the personnel nor the approach.

Coherent policy

This contrasts with Barcelona, where Messi has played for just two first-team coaches: Rijkaard and Pep Guardiola. As an institution, Barca have maintained a coherent policy in the youth system for decades now - one which is now paying dividends.

Despite the merry-go-round of Argentina coaches, Messi soon became the central creative force for Argentina, especially after Juan Roman Riquelme quit the national team. Yet in taking on greater responsibility for the team, his goalscoring suffered. Ironically, the player said to be Maradona's natural heir produced his worst return under Maradona the coach, with just three goals in 16 appearances.

In the aftermath of the Copa America embarrassment, Sabella was handed the task of swiftly turning around the results, and focusing on building a team for the 2014 World Cup. One of his first decisions was to change his captain, and in turn award Messi with another honour this year: making him skipper.

As Sabella himself has admitted, Messi is far from being the tub-thumping *caudillo*, the charismatic leader, but he expects him to lead by example.

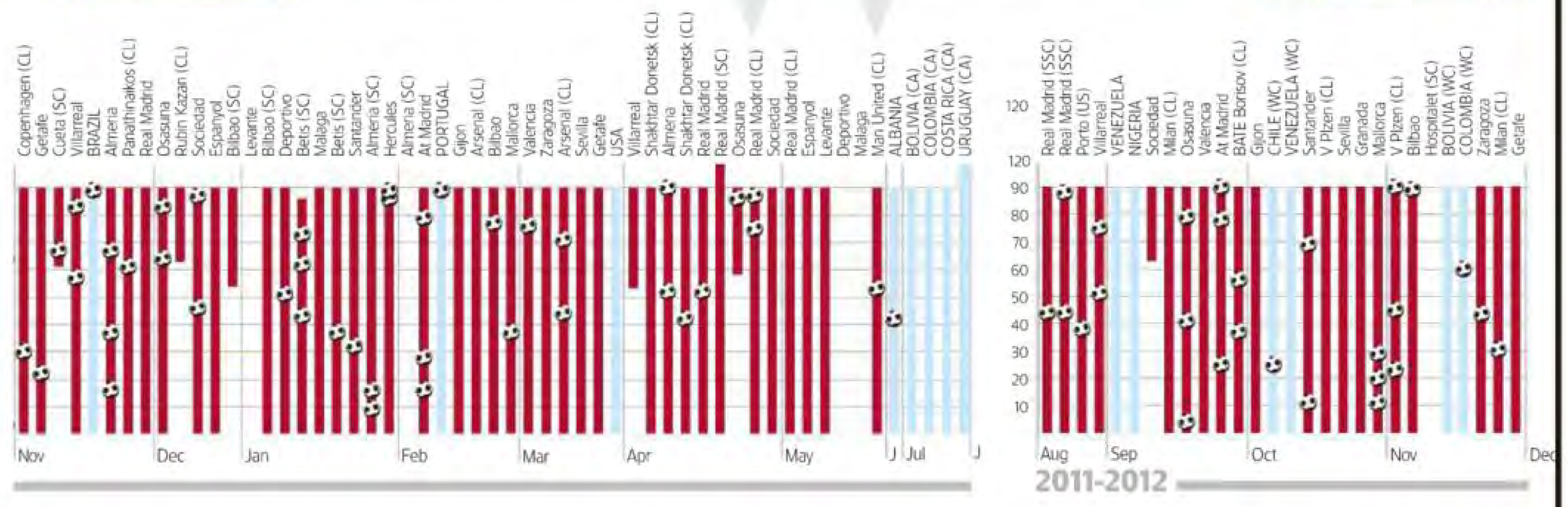
"Messi is the key player," he says. "Whenever he has the ball you expect something to happen."

It is this expectancy that grows with every dip of the shoulder, every dribble, every geometrically perfect pass and every hat-trick. His two goals for Argentina at the tail end of the year suggest he may be nearing the form that silences even the most stubborn – and demanding – of critics. **WS**

Talent rewarded...with the European Cup after Barca's victory over Manchester United at Wembley

Apr 27, 2011 – scores twice in the Champions League semi-final first leg win against Real Madrid in the Bernabeu.

May 28, 2011 – Barcelona win their fourth European Cup with a dazzling display against Manchester United at Wembley.



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Facetoface

ARRIGO SACCHI

"Today's Barcelona are one of the three greatest teams ever"

The 65-year-old won two European Cups as coach of Milan and was in charge of Italy's national team for five years

People say that, when appointed coach of Milan in 1987, you transformed the mentality of Italian football, adopting a more attacking philosophy. Do you agree?
In Italy I think the mentality did not really change. Recently I said to some friends that, if I was the one who changed Italian football, I should have left it as it was. Obviously this is a joke, but from the end of the 1980s there has not been a significant change of mentality in our country. There has been no movement to follow on from what we did with that fantastic Milan team. Looking back, I think we lost a big opportunity.

Your very early days at the San Siro were difficult. How did you survive such challenges?
It was to become a magnificent Milan team, probably unrepeatable, but I was grateful to Silvio Berlusconi because he always placed his trust in me, especially at the beginning when the first losses came. The board always supported me. Always. For example, after a loss at home against Fiorentina early in the 1987-88 season, Marco Van Basten criticised me quite severely. But the board trusted me and said follow your way, it is the right way. In the following match, at Cesena, I left Van Basten on the bench and he asked me to explain my decision. I told him: "Well Marco, since you are so good tactically, you can sit next to me on the bench and point out all my mistakes to me during the match." I was only able to do this because everybody at Milan trusted me.

What was the secret behind the Milan team that won two European Cups in successive seasons?
There was no secret, only a great team. Silvio Berlusconi didn't want other managers coming to Milanello to watch the training but I told him: "Mr President, it is not a problem at all. They can watch all the training sessions they like, but if they do not have the key, they cannot open the door." And, you know, there is a big difference if La Traviata is conducted by Riccardo Muti or by my cousin. It is opera in both cases, but conducted in a very different way.

What have been the most important tactical revolutions in football?
There has been only one real tactical revolution and it happened when football shifted from an individual to a collective game. It happened with Ajax first and then the Holland national team at the beginning of the 1970s. For Johan Cruyff and the rest of the Dutch players the field suddenly became small; for the other teams, the field remained enormously big. This philosophy marked the difference between me and Silvio Berlusconi, tactically speaking. He thought that football was a beautiful game played by skilled individuals and I thought – and I still think that it is a beautiful game played by a team collectively.

You have often criticised Italian football for not having "a project". Do you think that an Italian equivalent of Alex Ferguson is impossible in Italy?
Absolutely. I know Alex Ferguson and I think he is a great man with a lot of qualities on and off the football pitch. But in Italy not a single president is forward-looking enough or has enough patience to buy players who they can build a project around. They only buy the players they believe will get the fans excited. Recently, after the draw against Barcelona, I criticised Max Allegri and his Milan side. I asked how it was possible for a team whose mission has always been to play spectacular football to play so defensively for 90 minutes. No, I would say that Italy is still far behind, at least according to my way of thinking about football.

For you, who are the teams that have changed the history of football?
I have seen three great teams in my lifetime: the Ajax and Holland side of the 1970s; my Milan at the end of the 1980s; and today Barcelona with Pep Guardiola at the helm.

Guardiola is at a club with a strong tradition of Dutch coaches: Johan Cruyff first, then Louis Van Gaal and Frank Rijkaard. Has he copied the Dutch philosophy?
Their Barcelona teams played a different type of football. I played against Cruyff when he was the manager of Barcelona and they did not pay a lot of attention to the defensive aspect of the game. Guardiola's team play a more complete style because all the players in his team can attack and defend. This is a new version of "*totaalvoetbal*".

What do you believe has gone wrong with Italy's national team?
After the Word Cup Final defeat to Brazil in 1994 I said during a FIFA conference that Milan are stronger than the Italian national team and maybe even a smaller club like Rimini are stronger than the *Azzurri*. International teams are overcome by clubs. Training the players every day is very different to seeing them only once in a while, mainly to play friendlies that no one actually cares about. In any case, I think that my best Italy team were in 1996 at the European Championship in England. Those players played together for four years. In the last group game against Germany we played a wonderful match and, paradoxically, we went out in the first round after a dramatic defeat by the Czech Republic. I probably made a lot of mistakes during that tournament but that team played some excellent football.

Interview by Luca Ferrato

On Italian football...

"For Italians, football is not a game and it is not a passion; it is a reflection of society. So football has to be sufferance, sacrifice, craftiness and improvisation. Italians have brought to football their style of life"

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Facetoface

KARL-HEINZ RUMMENIGGE

"FIFA and UEFA need the clubs more than we need them"

Twice a World Cup runner-up, the former Germany forward and now Bayern Munich chief executive is looking to reshape the way the game is run

As president of the European Club Association (ECA), how would you describe the working relationship with your counterparts at FIFA and UEFA?
We've had our good times and our bad times. When the ECA was first set up in 2008 the relationship was a productive one. But, I have to say, for the last six months it's not been so good. Currently there are no discussions on the renewal of the present agreement, which runs out in mid-2014, and we don't seem to be making particular headway regarding our aims: the need for more democracy and transparency in football's decision-making process at the highest level; a redrawn international calendar; universal insurance cover for players on international duty; and clubs receiving proper compensation when their players are called up for national teams. It's getting to the point where I'm not especially optimistic about reaching an acceptable agreement.

You have spoken about the possibility of clubs boycotting the Champions League. Is that a real prospect?
We've often discussed how we would proceed if we could not come to an agreement with the football authorities, and we are unanimous as to what our next move should be. If we don't settle a new memorandum with FIFA and UEFA by Christmas of 2011, I will have to ask our board and general assembly whether they are ready to go their own way, to organise our own competition. I feel FIFA and UEFA are underestimating the clubs. They need us more than we need them. Without the players – our employees – the governing bodies could do nothing. We could run the Champions League without them.

How big a sticking point are your demands for adequate compensation for players' release to national teams?
A couple of weeks ago I really did have the feeling we were close to a deal on this. We'd agreed total compensation for Euro 2012 of €55million, but when you realise that is only 3.5 per cent of UEFA's European Championship income it's obvious we are talking about relatively small amounts of money. As far as we are concerned the €55m was only the first step and we made it clear we needed more. However, a couple of days ago I heard that our latest request for compensation had been labelled excessive. I said to myself: "OK, I got your message."

What is your biggest bone of contention with the governing bodies?
Without doubt the international calendar. Look at how it's evolving. From cycle to cycle [every four years], there is a substantial increase in games. Eight years ago we had 40 games in that time frame, now it's up to 46. We gave up the second group-phase of the Champions League because we believed that it would be good for our players to have more rest. But what happened? The national teams took up those dates and the players have more on their plate than ever. That cannot be fair by any stretch of the imagination. We're not fighting a battle here for the clubs or the leagues but for the players. They need more rest, more time to regenerate.

So August and June fixtures must go?
Of course. The games in August are an absolute nonsense. In many countries the domestic championship has barely started or not got under way at all. I'm not happy with June either. I'd like to see the Champions League Final as the last fixture of the campaign. Let the players have their holidays. Give club coaches the necessary time to prepare for a long and hard season. By eating away into the summer months we make his job very difficult. Sometimes I'm astonished at how the authorities react to our concerns. UEFA president Michel Platini, who played at the very highest level, looks at me as if I'm crazy when I raise these issues. I'm not crazy. All we want is more common sense. There has to be pre-qualification for World Cups and European Championships. If we can have it in the Champions League, why not in international football too? The counter-argument is that the likes of San Marino and Malta have the right to play the big nations. But in truth there is only one reason for this – money.

Should the national federations demand the cleaning up of FIFA?
I believe only two – England and Germany – are really critical of FIFA. It should be up to the federations to clean up the business, to root out the corruption. The normal thing would be to push for transparent and democratic decision-making, to ask for all relevant stakeholders – players, clubs, leagues, federations and referees – to be involved. But I have the impression that the federations only seek to protect FIFA. The policies of FIFA and UEFA are made to measure to suit the federations.

Do Sepp Blatter's proposals for the reform of FIFA go far enough for you?
The current image of football is a big problem for the whole football family. There have been far too many stories of corruption and clearly the system has to change in a very tangible way. Now that Mr Blatter has established all these "task forces" it's only right I give them a fair chance to sort out the existing problems. I'm very curious to see how this pans out. Then we will see how serious FIFA, and especially Mr Blatter, is about this matter. It is clear he is under a lot of pressure to put his house in order. He is being watched very closely by the football family and the entire world. The system has looked very dirty, so it's up to him to act to put it right.

Interview by Nick Bidwell

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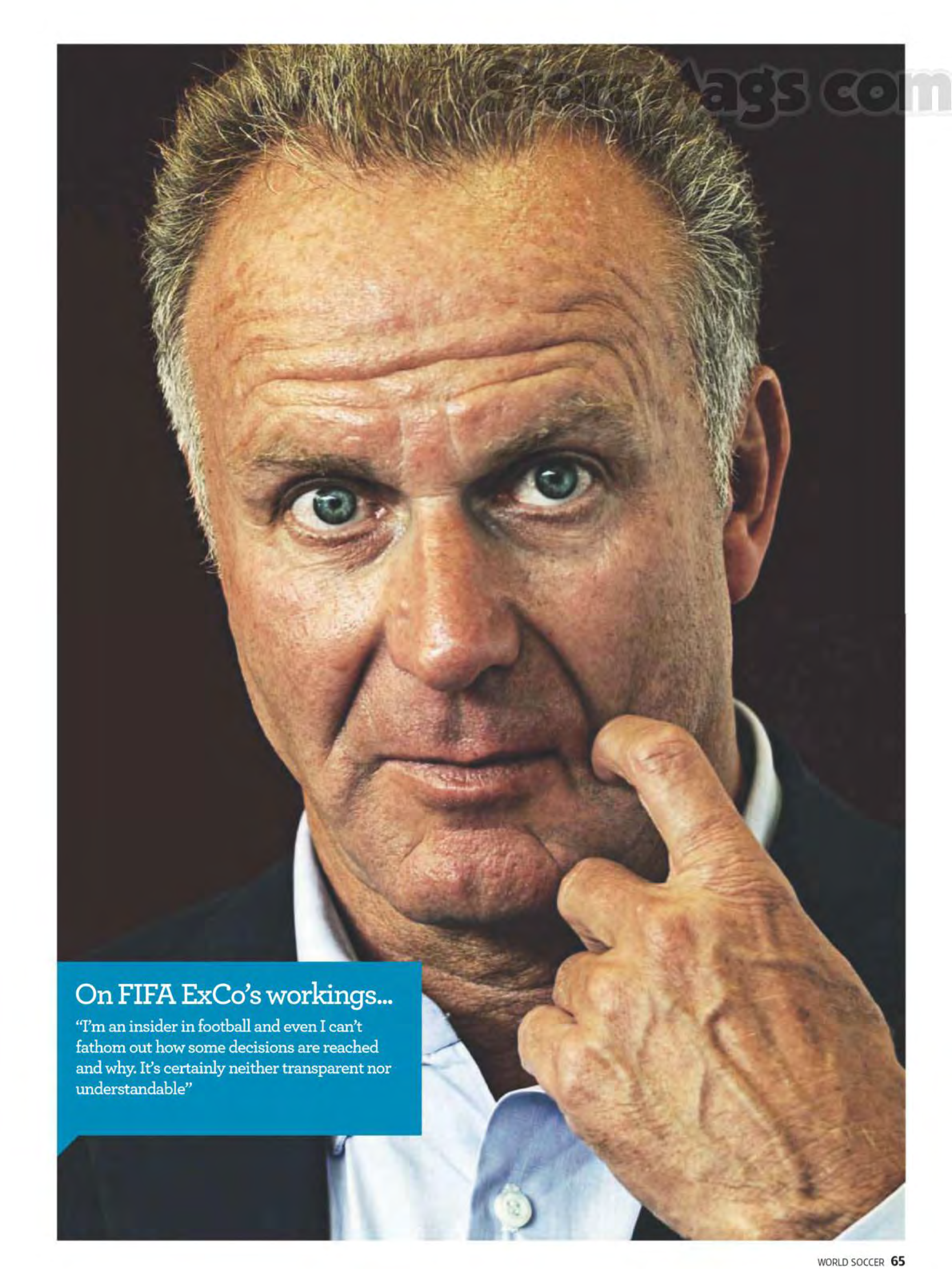

On FIFA ExCo's workings...

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High line costs AVB

Jonathan Wilson explains why Chelsea are struggling with their coach's new defensive set-up

Chelsea's Andre Villas-Boas may be a forward-thinking, progressive coach, but his attempts to impose a high line on players who seem reluctant, or unable, to adapt have resulted in defeats this season against Manchester United, Queens Park Rangers, Arsenal, Liverpool (twice) and Bayer Leverkusen.

It's almost obligatory in any piece about Villas-Boas to reference his similarities to previous Porto and Chelsea boss Jose Mourinho, but the most intriguing thing about the two former colleagues is their different tactical approach. While Mourinho likes his defence to sit deep – as seen nowhere more clearly than in Internazionale's second leg of the Champions League semi-final against Barcelona at the Camp Nou in 2010 – Villas-Boas prefers his sides to press high up the pitch.

However, that policy has proved problematic for Villas-Boas at Chelsea, whose back four is simply not equipped to play it.

John Terry is a battering ram of a defender who is at his best when the ball is in front of him. But leave space behind him and his lack of pace can be exploited. At 31, the limited pace he did once have is deserting him, making him even more vulnerable. When Terry was at his best he played in combination with a quick, intelligent defender – Ricardo Carvalho or Rio Ferdinand – tidying up behind while he did the hard, physical work, throwing himself into tackles and aerial battles.

At Chelsea this season, though, he hasn't even had a regular partner, with Alex, David Luiz and Branislav Ivanovic all being used alongside him.

Luiz's positional sense, in particular, has been called into question at times. The full-backs, similarly, have seemed uncertain in the new set-up, and the suspicion is that age is beginning to sap

> Terry is at his best when the ball is in front of him...leave space behind him and a lack of pace can be exposed

Tough... Terry (left) finds Gervinho a handful as Chelsea crash 5-3 at home to Arsenal

SteveMags.com

Problems...Villas-Boas

at Ashley Cole as well. It's not just the back four, though. In the 5-3 defeat by Arsenal, in particular, Chelsea's pressing was poor, and that in turn leaves a high line vulnerable to balls played in behind if an unpressured opponent has time to play with calculation and accuracy.

Take the chance Robin Van Persie volleyed over after 12 minutes. This came about because John Obi Mikel was drawn out of position as a result of Daniel Sturridge and Jose Bosingwa failing to close down the Arsenal left-back Andre Santos. That in turn led to Cole being exposed against Theo Walcott. Understandably, Cole sat off rather than risk being roasted by Walcott's pace, giving the winger – whose delivery has been much improved this season – time to measure his cross.

The first Arsenal goal came about because Frank Lampard, distracted by making a point to the referee, left a gap for Aaron Ramsey to exploit, then neither Terry nor Ivanovic followed Gervinho's run. Bosingwa was horribly out of position for Arsenal's second; Mikel, Cole, Ivanovic and Terry were all caught napping by Walcott for the third; and the fourth stemmed from an awful Florent Malouda back pass even before Terry's slip.

Chelsea's problem is not one element malfunctioning but repeated individual errors leading to an overall problem. With a deep-lying defence, when roles are more obviously compartmentalised (the attackers attack, the defenders defend), it's possible for sides to get away with it. Whatever mistakes are made, there will always be a line of four (plus Mikel) to break through further up the pitch. With a high line, though, the whole team has to function as a unit or the slightest flaw will be magnified.

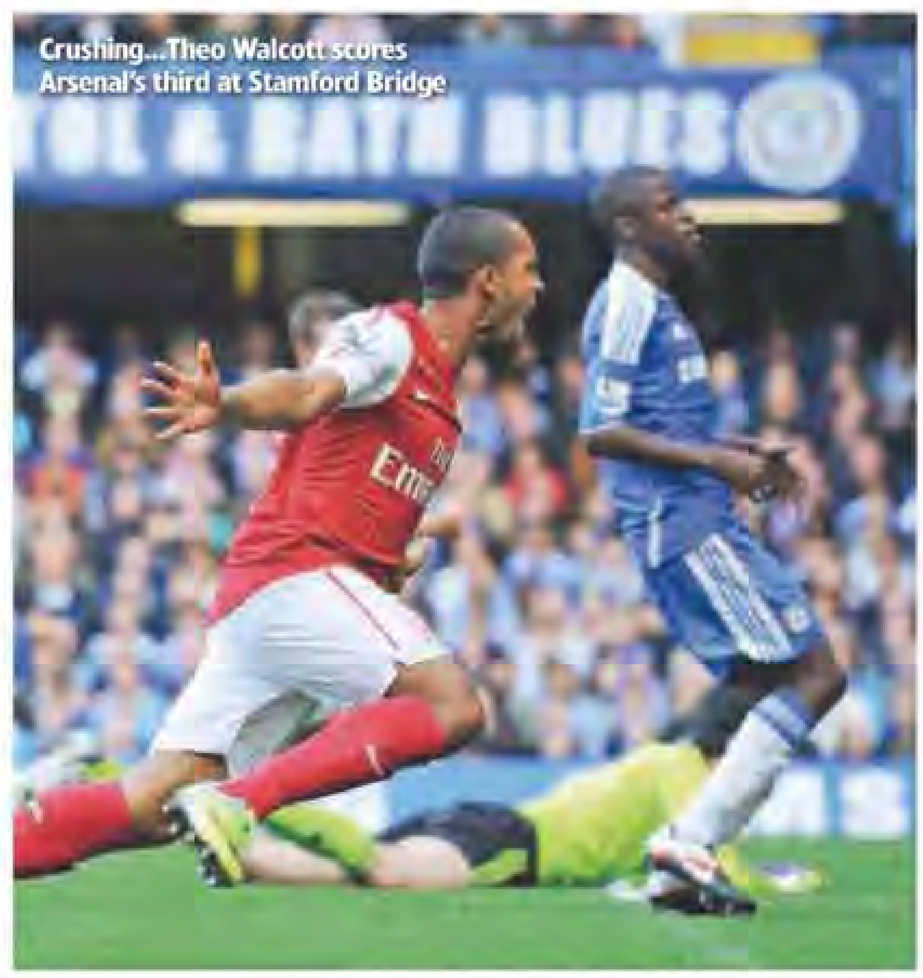
Chelsea's is not merely an ageing squad, it is a squad set in its ways, and is therefore an old dog being forced to attempt new tricks. Seven of the starting XI in the Premier League defeat by Liverpool in November played for Mourinho at Stamford Bridge. There is dark talk of a cabal of senior figures who dominate the dressing room, and few doubt that players were, at least in part, behind the dismissals of Avram Grant and Luiz Felipe Scolari.

Such an environment makes change difficult; paradoxically, the culture of short-termism at Chelsea, the frequent switches of manager, has made genuine change harder.

Chelsea's is a squad in need of renewal. It has been allowed to grow old together and this is because no leader since Mourinho has been at the club long enough to begin to impose his vision. The question is whether Villas-Boas is the man to enact that change.

> Villas-Boas was almost too successful during his time at Porto and there was no indication how he would fare in adversity

The worrying thing about the 34-year-old's time at Porto was that he was almost too successful and there was no indication of how he would fare in adversity. Domestically he overcame Benfica and Sporting Lisbon sides who were at a low ebb, and even in the Europa League he managed to avoid teams from England, Germany and Italy, while playing an exhausted Villarreal and an out-of-sorts Sevilla. His first three tests against "big" sides with Chelsea all ended in defeat.


Crushing...Theo Walcott scores Arsenal's third at Stamford Bridge

When Villas-Boas was appointed, it was presented as a move for stability, installing a young man who would be given time to rejuvenate the squad in his image. Chelsea, it was implied, bought into his tactical vision. If so, they must have known transition was inevitable.

Either Chelsea give Villas-Boas the time and the resources to overhaul the squad, or they own up to a mistake and axe yet another manager. But that, of course, would leave the new manager to answer the same issues with which the current manager is struggling. WS

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Talentscout

Eduardo VARGAS

COUNTRY	Chile
CLUB	Universidad de Chile
POSITION	Forward
AGE	22 (20.11.89)
PREVIOUS CLUB	Cobreloa
INTERNATIONAL DEBUT	November 2009, v Paraguay
CAPS	9 (2 goals)
HONOURS	2011 Chilean apertura

As the competition's top scorer, Eduardo Vargas' eight goals helped Universidad de Chile progress to the Final of the Sudamericana Cup and him earn the label "the new Alexis Sanchez".

Like Sanchez, he started his professional career with Club de Deportes Cobreloa of Calama, in the dusty, desert environment of the north of the country, but there are appreciable differences between Vargas and the Barcelona wide man.

While Sanchez was a local boy, from nearby Tocopilla, Vargas comes from the capital Santiago, hundreds of miles to the south. Having trained with two clubs from his home city, Universidad Catolica and Palestino, it was his appearance in a 2005 football-based reality-TV show that brought him to Cobreloa's attention and earned him a contract.

He made his debut in 2006 and showed steady progress over the next three years, which he then kept up after moving back south to join Universidad de Chile at the start of 2010.

A useful option during his first season – in a counter-attacking *La U* side that became the first Chilean semi-finalists in the Libertadores Cup since 1997 – Vargas has since blossomed under the bolder approach of latest coach Jorge Sampaoli.

Adopting the style and swagger of former Chile national coach and fellow Argentinian Marcelo Bielsa, Sampaoli always seeks to attack, with his compact, dynamic, aggressive team adopting a high defensive line and employing the obligatory centre-forward plus two wide strikers.

Quick, incisive, cunning and carrying a threat in either foot, Vargas has been carving open defences and wreaking havoc on a weekly basis. And after *La U* won the 2011 apertura title, Chile's top-flight captains named him player of the tournament, with Deportes La Serena skipper Mauricio Salazar explaining: "He was the key man because his speed opened up the flanks, he set goals up and scored them as well."

Europe clearly beckons for Vargas and the only debate would seem to be whether he moves in the January transfer window or stays for the forthcoming Libertadores campaign before his club cash in during the summer.

Villarreal head the list of interested parties after they had a glimpse of the Vargas threat when Spain's national team met Chile in a friendly in Switzerland, in September, as he slipped behind the Spanish defensive line to beat Iker Casillas with aplomb and score his first international goal. His second followed a month later against Peru in a World Cup qualifier.

His last international outing was in November's World Cup clash with Paraguay, when he and Sanchez – who missed the start of the Brazil 2014 campaign through injury – filled the flank roles in a comfortable 2-0 win to provide evidence that, even after Bielsa's departure for Athletic Bilbao, Chile's national side still stand out for their use of quick and skilful strikers cutting in from wide spaces.

Tim Vickery

> After Universidad won the 2011 apertura, Chile's top-flight captains named Vargas player of the tournament

Jean-Armel KANA-BIYIK

COUNTRY	Cameroon
CLUB	Rennes (Fra)
POSITION	Central defender
AGE	22 (03.07.89)
PREVIOUS CLUB	Le Havre (Fra)

With relatives like his, the Rennes defender was never going to be anything other than a professional footballer. The son of ex-Cameroon midfielder Andre Kana-Biyik and nephew of his dad's former national team-mate Francois Omam-Biyik, Jean-Armel has started out so well in the family business that he is already being mentioned in the same breath as former France veteran Lilian Thuram.

Widely acclaimed for his explosive speed, athleticism, strength in the air and fierce competitive spirit, the biggest obstacle the youngster has faced so far has been the question of who to play his representative football for: France, where he was born and has always lived, or Cameroon, the land of his much-revered kin?

Earlier in his career, he had tended towards France, earning his first cap for the under-21s in March 2008 against Estonia and subsequently appearing in four more games at that level. But as time went by, and the Cameroon federation started to cosy up to him, he began to feel differently. When he refused a call-up to the France under-21 squad in October 2010 - citing uncertainty as to which way to jump - it was clear who was winning the day and he has now definitively pledged himself to the Indomitable Lions.

"Cameroon showed a real desire to see me in their famous green shirt," says the centre-half who learnt his craft at Le Havre before joining Rennes in the summer of 2010. "I didn't have the same vibes from the French.

"I don't want to start a war of words. I did my best to force my way into the full French squad, but Laurent Blanc didn't want me."

Inevitably, the affair has provoked quite a debate and even Rennes coach Frederic Antonetti has made no attempt to hide his displeasure at Kana-Biyik's decision, saying: "Impatience is not the best of advisors. Central defence is a position with big responsibilities and the truth is he doesn't yet have enough experience to be picked for France in that role. He has the potential to one day make the step up, but the national coach already has his men in place.

"It would have been better to take a more measured approach. What a pity France have lost him."

Nick Bidwell

Adam Larsen KWARASEY

COUNTRY	Ghana
CLUB	Stromsgodset (Nor)
POSITION	Goalkeeper
AGE	24 (12.12.87)
PREVIOUS CLUB	Valerenga (Nor)
INTERNATIONAL DEBUT	September 2011, v Swaziland
CAPS	5

On the basis of his top-drawer display for Ghana in their 1-0 friendly loss to Brazil at Craven Cottage in London earlier this season, supporters of the Black Stars can be sure of a safe pair of hands between the posts for many years to come.

With the country's long-serving first-choice goalkeeper Richard Kingson generally thought to be past his prime, fans and media in the west African nation had been calling for a changing of the guard in that area for some time. And after feasting on the sight of Kwarasey pulling off a string of fine saves against Brazil - most notably to deny Ronaldinho and Alexandre Pato - Ghana coach Goran Stevanovic has decided to hand them what they want.

The Oslo-born son of a Norwegian mother and Ghanaian father, Kwarasey officially applied to play for Ghana as long ago as 2008 but he was only given clearance this summer, the final push through the administrative logjam being the work of Ghana FA president Kwesi Nyantakhi.

With Norwegian top-flight side Stromsgodset since 2007, Kwarasey - who made one appearance for Norway under-21s back in 2008 - maintains that he never lost faith in the process and he would have waited even longer if need be, saying: "I'm a patient person. I knew it was going to take time. It was simply a case of waiting for the matter to take its course and be ready to seize my chance when it finally arrived.

"I didn't choose Ghana over Norway. As I have a half-and-half identity, it was more a case of which country would like to have me. When people in Ghana first got to hear about me, I received a lot of messages of support. They seemed enthusiastic for me to play for their country and as a result my passion for the Black Stars grew."

Barely tested on his international debut in a 2-0 win over Swaziland in an African Nations Cup qualifier, it was a different story three days later against Brazil. He had a busy night facing the *Selecao*, but stood tall throughout, was brave and competent, and caught the eye with his elasticity, sharp reflexes, positioning and nerveless gathering of high balls - and Stevanovic has started him in all three games since.

Nick Bidwell

Stormmagazine.com

Christopher DIBON

COUNTRY	Austria
CLUB	Admira Wacker
POSITION	Central defender
AGE	21 (02.11.90)
INTERNATIONAL DEBUT	June 2011, v Lithuania
CAPS	1 (1 goal)

If recently appointed Austria coach Marcel Koller is to make any headway in improving the fortunes of a team apparently hooked on failure, he urgently needs to find a new generation of players with talent and character.

Top of that list should be the Admira Wacker defender and skipper whose exemplary form this season has been instrumental in the promoted club's place among the Bundesliga leaders.

One of the great Viennese teams of the inter-war period, Admira have suffered no end of problems since those halcyon days: - financial crises, forced mergers, relegations and administrative demotions. But one aspect of the club which has always been first-class is their youth development and Dibon is shaping up to be one of their best discoveries – said by some to have the potential to be Austria's best centre-back since the late Bruno Pezzey appeared on the scene in the 1970s.

The danger, of course, is that hype can burn. But if anyone can live up to the inflated expectations, it is this grounded and driven individual who, despite his growing fame, seems determined to keep his eye on four well-defined goals of making Admira a domestic force, a regular place in the Austria side, a move abroad and the chance to play in the Champions League.

"There's only one way to get on, always give 100 per cent"

Christopher Dibon

"I'm very ambitious," he says. "There's only one way to get on – to always give 100 per cent."

A close look at his game and mentality says he has every right to dream. As intense a competitor as his favourite defender, Sergio Ramos of Real Madrid, he is a quick thinker who is calm under pressure and surprisingly strong in the air for someone of only medium height. He rarely suffers off-days and was an obvious choice to wear the captain's armband for both Admira and Austria's under-21s thanks to his natural authority.

Over the past 12 months, he has enjoyed a remarkable sequence of achievements, with a starring role in Admira's promotion to the Austrian top flight, his election as the country's best young player of last season and a goal on his international debut.

The momentum is very much with him. Now for the hard bit.

Nick Bidwell

FIVE TO FOLLOW

RISING STARS OF THE EUROPEAN LEAGUES' PACE-SETTERS

Younes BELHANDA

Club Montpellier (Fra)
Age 21 (25.02.90)
Position Midfielder

Morocco playmaker whose artistry has done so much to turn his club into Ligue 1 title contenders. Has benefited hugely from a switch from the wing to a central position.

Jose CALLEJON

Club Real Madrid (Spa)
Age 24 (11.02.87)
Position Right-winger

Underlined the Galacticos' strength in depth with a stunning display in their 6-2 thrashing of Dinamo Zagreb in the Champions League, scoring twice and catching the eye.

Rasmus ELM

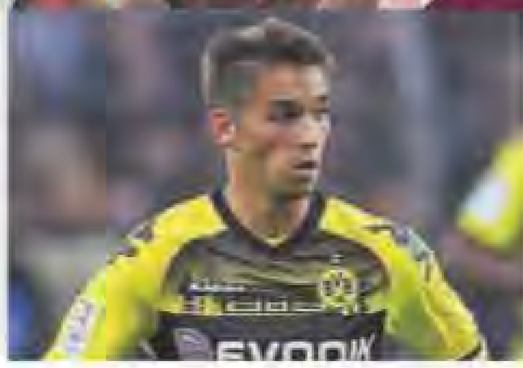
Club AZ (Hol)
Age 23 (17.03.88)
Position Midfielder

Former national coach Lars Lagerback once called the Sweden star their most talented individual since Zlatan Ibrahimovic – an opinion validated by the way he has lit up the Eredivisie with his creativity and goals.

Leonard KWEUKE

Club Sparta Prague (CzR)
Age 24 (12.07.87)
Position Striker

You would expect a cousin of Samuel Eto'o to know a thing or two about putting the ball in the net and the Cameroon international is keeping the family tradition alive. Voted the revelation of the Czech league last term.



MORITZ LEITNER

Club Borussia Dortmund (Ger)
Age 19 (08.12.92)
Position Midfielder

Began his career at 1860 Munich and is currently on loan to Dortmund from Augsburg, the teenager has impressed with his speed, endurance, two-footed ability and remarkable self-confidence.

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Soccer Cities Istanbul

Peterjon Cresswell visits the football-crazy capital that straddles two continents

Although the passion and fervour of match day can occasionally spill over into hostility, and the casual spectator may need to keep their wits about them at times, the atmosphere at big games in Turkey's capital is unlike anything anywhere else in Europe, with a memorable show of colour and noise being whipped up inside the stadia several hours before kick-off.

Dominating the domestic game in terms of support, media interest and success, the city's "big three" have been involved in all 53 seasons of the national championship (which started half a century after they did) and the Super Lig title has left Istanbul only once in the past 27 years – although a match-fixing scandal this summer did see a non-Istanbul side, Trabzonspor, awarded the country's Champions League group-stage place.

Formed in 1903, **Besiktas** are the oldest of the trio and have won the league 13 times, while **Galatasaray** (1905) were the first Turkish team to win a European trophy (the UEFA Cup in 2000) and have 17 titles – which is one less than **Fenerbahce** on the Asian side of town, who remain the country's most universally popular club.

The city's fourth club, **Istanbul BB**, were only formed in 1990 from an amalgamation of clubs but they did reach last season's Turkish Cup Final, where they lost on penalties to Besiktas.

Rivalry...Gala's Ayhan Akman shields the ball from Mehmet Topuz of Fenerbahce

ISTANBUL BB

ATATURK OLYMPIC STADIUM

The national stadium, which holds 76,000 people, was built at a cost of €350 million between 1999 and 2002 and was key to Istanbul's failed bid to stage the 2008 Olympics. Host of the 2005 Champions League Final between Liverpool and Milan, the stadium is home to Istanbul BB, whose fans fill barely a quarter of its capacity. A long taxi drive from almost anywhere in town, the stadium is situated way past the high rises of Ikitelli in the north-west. Special buses are laid on for match days, but allow at least an hour to get there by whichever method you use.

BESIKTAS

BJK INONU STADIUM

After expansion in 2002, plans to further increase the current capacity of 32,000 are yet to come to fruition. The stadium is, however, an easy hop from Taksim or Eminonu, with an unbeatable view of the Dolmabahce Palace and waterfront. The most expensive seats here are the *numerali* ("numbered") in the *kapali* ("covered") section, while the *acik* is the open terrace. For a pre-match drink, visit the leafy Dolmabahce terrace, overlooking the palace of the same name, or the old-style sports bar, the Kazan, which is less than a 10-minute walk from the ground and situated by Besiktas market.

THE BIG DERBY CLASH

For intensity, there are few derbies to rival Istanbul's clash between Galatasaray and Fenerbahce. Along with the long pre-match build-up of drums, flares and ritual chanting, there is usually more than just local pride at stake – 15 of the past 20 Turkish league titles have gone to one of the two clubs. The first recorded trouble between the two sides came in 1934 when a derby game had to be abandoned after fighting between rival players. The most notorious incident occurred in the 1996 Turkish Cup Final, when victorious Gala manager Graeme Souness nearly provoked a riot by planting his club's flag right in the middle of the Fener centre circle, adding considerable insult to injury.

GALATASARAY

TURK TELEKOM ARENA

Also known as the Ali Sami Yen Spor Kompleksi, in memory of their famous old Ali Sami Yen stadium, Gala moved into their new 52,700-capacity home in January 2011, and within a few weeks had broken the world record for crowd noise with a deafening 131.76 decibels. The ground is within easy reach from Seyrantepe metro station on the blue M2 line. From there, walk along Aslanli Yol ("lion road"). Payment at the various bars and food courts is with an in-house chip card.

DIARY DATES

The next Fenerbahce v Galatasaray Super Lig game is due to take place at the Sukru Saracoglu Stadium on March 17. The following week, Istanbul BB host Besiktas at the Ataturk Olympic Stadium on March 24.

THE GAME'S GRASS ROOTS

With Ottoman rulers frowning upon the foreign influence of the game, Istanbul's football clubs all have their roots in areas of the city with large Christian or Jewish populations or foreign schools. Geographically, Galatasaray and Fenerbahce are separated by a continental divide, with Fener's ground on the Asian side of the city. Traditionally, Galatasaray had a more educated, middle-class fan base, with the club having historic ties to the Lycee school in the Beyoglu area of town. The founder of the post-Ottoman Turkish republic, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, was a Fenerbahce fan and most cosmopolitan in his outlook, and by the 1930s there was a thriving Istanbul league and regional play-offs.

MATCH TICKETS

For all match tickets, the Biletix agency (www.biletix.com) has outlets around the city, including one in Taksim metro station.

FENERBAHCE

SUKRU SARACOGLU STADIUM

Renovated between 1995 and 2006, the 2009 UEFA Cup Final host stadium holds 50,500 in comfortable surroundings. Named after the former club chairman who was also Turkey's prime minister, the stadium offers unique luxury in the Maraton and Fenerium stands along the sidelines, with LCD monitors behind each seat. As most visitors base themselves on the European side of Istanbul, a trip to Fenerbahce means crossing the Bosphorus by boat. From the harbour, it's a short taxi ride to the ground. Before the game enjoy a drink in the sports cafe, Mackolik, down by the canal.

WHERE IN THE WORLD?

Istanbul is the only city in the world situated on two continents.

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Keir Radnedge

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THE INSIDER The expert view on events off the pitch

Blatter's never-ending crisis

World football's house of cards is fluttering in the draft of one scandal after another. FIFA president Sepp Blatter's belated reform process has been assailed by the retreats of Joao Havelange and Ricardo Teixeira, uncertainties surrounding Mohamed Bin Hammam and Theo Zwanziger, and the individualistic course steered by Michel Platini. Then came the "transparency" falling out of FIFA's two main governance advisers, a legally-enforced halt to the promised publication of a key document in the ISL scandal and the continuing squabble with Brazilian politicians over the 2014 World Cup...

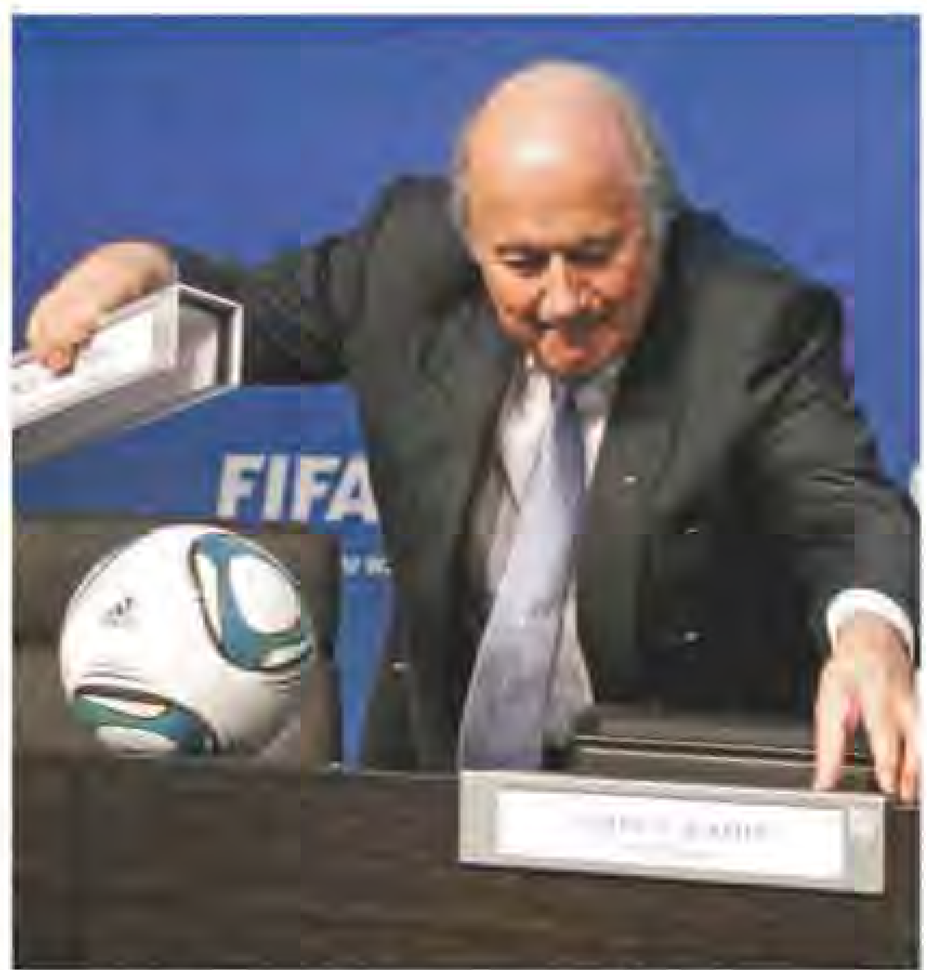
It's a lonely job, being president of FIFA. Sepp Blatter says so. The fault, he claims, rests with those naughty members of the executive committee with which the six regional confederations surround him.

Blatter's most recent musings on the ultimate question of life, the universe and everything – like a sort of football version of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* – came amid the latest damaging twist of the reform process set in motion at Congress last June.

The 75-year-old Swiss roamed into the issue among a recent plethora of image-polishing interviews when he was asked why so much scandal had surrounded ExCo members? He replied that while he had been elected by Congress, the other 23 members "put their own interests first". But, despite all of his years in FIFA since 1975, the light did not dawn until it came to the comparatively recent internal battle to take the World Cup to South Africa.

He added: "First, when I wanted to convince the ExCo, I found I was on my own. Nobody believed in it and everyone thought, for one thing, we would lose a lot of money. In fact, we have never made such a surplus from a World Cup. Not only FIFA; all of our 203 member associations profited financially from the success of the World Cup in 2010.

"My daughter, Corinne, has said to me: 'Why do you keep going? Let them get on with it themselves.' But I must go on; I haven't finished my mission."



Staying put...Blatter

Asked if his sense of mission would not have made him better suited to be Pope rather than FIFA president, Blatter conceded that he had once considered the church but then he went into the hotel business instead and found it far more enjoyable. He had no doubt, nevertheless, that God liked football.

He also said he had never been tempted by politics, adding that while he did not have personal phone numbers for Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev, "I know how to contact them if I need to".

At the moment the governance experts clashing around FIFA are somewhat less worldly-visible. One is Transparency International (TI), which generates most publicity and interest for its "transparency index" of national governments. The other is Swiss criminal law professor Mark Pieth, an occasional consultant to UN bodies.

Both came on board to assist the reform process. TI became involved initially through its own volition, while Pieth was commissioned by Blatter. Both came up with commonsense proposals though nothing which had not been stated, time after time and without acknowledgement, in the media.

Pressure for reform had become overwhelming after all the scandals surrounding the simultaneous 2018 and 2022 World Cup hosting awards. Ironically, almost a year to the day, Transparency International, in either a fit of pique or fear of being compromised, halted its work with FIFA.

> Blatter had considered the church...and had no doubt God liked football

Sylvia Schenk, TI's senior adviser for sport, had attended the press conference in October when Blatter praised her work and even suggested that TI might play a role in overseeing the reform process.

Acting independently

Pieth had been named by Blatter at his post-ExCo press conference in the same breath as TI. What was not made clear was that TI was acting independently, while Pieth was a paid consultant. This appears to be one of TI's objections: that Pieth cannot be independent of the organisation paying him.

Schenk says the funds needed for an independent body should be provided by a wider group, including sponsors and broadcasters...overlooking the fact that these are the organisations which fund FIFA directly in any case.

Her other objection was that Pieth was concerned only with looking to the future and not in dealing with past misdemeanours and malpractice. But this appeared to be stretching the brief too far. FIFA's past scandals will never go away: the big test for Blatter is whether

FIFA's command and control structure can be rebuilt.

Pieth defended his role as a paid consultant while denying the very spirit of his recommendations by declining a transparent clarification of how much he and his staff are being paid.

One of his key recommendations is limiting the terms of office of officials, which would include the president. True, the likes of Julio Grondona, Angel Maria Villar and Co do have to come up every now and again for re-election within their "home" confederations, but the longer they remain in power the more patronage they accrue and the more entrenched they become.

Hence the central power within the ExCo – and at the top of FIFA – is vested in a self-perpetuating gerontocracy.

FIFA is the ultimate example of the governance flaw common to many rich sports: they grew out of the amateurism era too fast for the governing and administrative structures to keep pace.

Thus it was unable to prevent former ExCo member Jack Warner having an interest in businesses dealing with regional television rights and with sports-travel-ticketing packages. Warner, did nothing to breach any rules simply because there were no rules.

Prince Ali of Jordan, one of the new and few ExCo members under 50, had the right attitude when he urged that the FIFA pyramid, to which Blatter is so attached, be turned upside down. The ExCo should not be the pinnacle governing the game below but should be the fulcrum, serving the game above it.

Advice...paid consultant Mark Pieth puts his point across

THE PIETH PROPOSALS

- The FIFA president should have a limited term in office, as should FIFA ExCo members
- Independent members should sit on the FIFA ExCo, with a lead director to hold elected members to account
- World Cup votes are "highly visible and politically sensitive decisions and...a mix of corruption risk and conflict of interest concerns" so the voting procedure needs to be revamped
- Payments to FIFA member associations and people and/or organisations close to them need "close financial scrutiny"
- Payments to contractors and service providers should be analysed to ensure no corruption
- Cash for FIFA development projects, such as the GOAL programme, should be controlled from beginning to end to ensure the money does not end up in the pockets of officials
- Specific rules need to be drawn up to clarify FIFA's position towards gifts and hospitality, political and charitable contributions
- A "discrete disclosure channel" hotline to report corruption should be made available
- FIFA should adopt corporate anti-corruption and anti conflict-of-interest controls
- FIFA officials should be subject to due diligence to establish whether they are suitable for office

Havelange steps back from scandal

Joao Havelange's sudden exit from the International Olympic Committee will not affect his status in Brazilian and South American sport says the country's new sports minister, Aldo Rebelo.

But the 95-year-old's resignation – ahead of an IOC inquiry into allegations over illicit payments from ISL, the former marketing partner of the IOC and FIFA during the majority of Havelange's 24-year presidency – represents a political and diplomatic cataclysm.

Havelange and the late Horst Dassler, the Adidas heir and ISL founder who was a sports political manipulator par excellence, laid the foundations for today's TV/sponsorship system of sports finance. Their legacy was the propulsion of football from merely the most popular sport in the world to a position of utter sporting and commercial domination.

But the crumbling of the personal pillars is not at an end. FIFA president Sepp Blatter's proposal to publish a crucial ISL document has been halted by legal action from an unnamed third party. Now it is being whispered that Ricardo Teixeira may soon follow the example of his former father-in-law and walk away.

That would be a massive blow for Teixeira. Havelange now holds no executive roles. But Teixeira is a FIFA ExCo member and president of the Brazilian football confederation (CBF). Already he has been forced to relinquish the formal role of president of the 2014 World Cup local organising authority (COL), installing old goalscoring hero ▶

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Ronaldo in his place.

In October the world federation had asked Brazilian state president Dilma Rousseff to remove Teixeira from COL as he became an increasing focus for controversy over his commercial affairs.

Teixeira, who has led Brazilian football since 1989 and is also a member of FIFA's executive committee, is being investigated by Brazil's federal police on suspicion of corruption and money laundering.

Presidency bid

Already Teixeira had said he would step down from the CBF after the World Cup and has brought in departing Corinthians president Andres Sanchez as his anointed heir. Unlikely as it seems, he was said to have been considering a bid for the FIFA presidency in 2015.

As for Havelange, the official version is that he has stepped down from the IOC on health and age grounds. Presumably he may feel that, to give this excuse further credibility, he should also relinquish his role as honorary president of FIFA.

Rebelo has said he does not believe Havelange's resignation will affect the credibility or organisations of either the 2014 World Cup or 2016 Olympics.

Rebelo took over this last autumn from Orlando Silva, who quit over allegations that he had been involved in diverting millions of dollars from a sports development programme. His successor says: "I think this decision was an entirely personal matter and I respect his reasoning. He is one of the great personalities of world sport but I don't think this will affect progress towards 2014 and 2016.

> The official version is Havelange stepped down on health grounds

"Brazil has great status in the football world, not only through having once organised the World Cup, but as record winners beyond anything achieved by any other country, including in Europe."

Havelange will retain his status as a "consultant" to the local 2016 Olympic organisers after having played a key role in Rio's winning of hosting rights during the IOC Session in Copenhagen in 2009. But IOC president Jacques Rogge has confirmed the shelving of an investigation into alleged links between Havelange and ISL.

Rogge, doubtless mightily relieved, says: "Havelange sent me a letter saying that he had lately had health issues and that stopped him from travelling, and he considered that due to his age and health it stopped him from travelling regularly."

End of an era ...former FIFA president Joao Havelange

Asked whether his resignation two days before the IOC discussed the ethics commission report was an indirect admission of guilt by Havelange, Rogge said that was just speculation, adding: "I am not going to comment on what is purely speculation.

"Joao Havelange already had missed other meetings, in the [IOC] session [in July] he was not there either, he missed major meetings of FIFA.

"Mr Havelange will not be an IOC member any more. Investigations only apply to IOC members.

"So as Mr Havelange will stop to be an IOC member there will not be an investigation into him as he is a private citizen."

Brazilian media is speculating that the controversial ISL bankruptcy file, which FIFA wants to reopen, indicates that Havelange received up to $1million connected with marketing and promotional contracts during his 24 years as world football president.

ISL was declared bankrupt in 2001 but legal action continued until 2008 when a criminal action was closed in an out-of-court settlement. That included an agreement with FIFA that the names of any linked individuals would never be disclosed. In June 2010 all those involved agreed to confirm, for the record, the sums they had received.

This latter agreement is the document which Blatter has proposed publishing in his attempts to undertake a reform process to help FIFA regain some credibility. The unnamed third party who has begun legal action to prevent disclosure is assumed to be one of those named. His (or her) nationality has not been clarified.

Controversy...Teixeira

Blatter has said that none of those named in the document are Swiss, which absolves him of direct involvement. The payment of inducements in connection with sports commercial contracts was not then illegal under Swiss law. Hence the only question over Blatter and his credibility vis-a-vis ISL concerns whether he was aware of such payments.

World Cup warnings

As for the 2014 World Cup, FIFA secretary-general Jerome Valcke flew to Brasilia and Rio to answer criticisms from local parliamentarians and try to hurry the much-delayed process along. Work on stadia and airports is grinding slowly into life, amid warnings from the unions of the dangers of corner-cutting, while the legal formalities have yet to be completed. Squabbles are ongoing over ticket prices, sale of alcohol in stadia and commercial piracy prevention.

Valcke told congressmen: "The general requirements asked by FIFA prior to Brazil's appointment as hosts are the same as for the previous FIFA World Cups. We are not asking any more than we did from Germany or South Africa, nor what we will be asking of Russia and Qatar.

"The requirements are also not more than what the Brazilian government agreed to fulfil when they were awarded the event back in 2007."

HEADLINERS

Bin Hammam: pinning hopes on an appeal

Mohamed Bin Hammam hopes that he will have a judgment from the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) over his appeal against his life ban from football before May so that he can fight the AFC's formal replacement of him as president.

The Qatari was kicked out of the game by the FIFA Ethics Committee in July over allegations of bribery concerning a campaign meeting organised on his behalf by the Caribbean Football Union (CFU) when he was seeking to oust Sepp Blatter as FIFA president.

The AFC appointed China's Zhang Jilong as interim president in his place, pending an election this spring.

Bin Hammam's approach to the CAS for an injunction to stop the AFC action was rejected pending a full hearing, which will now take place on January 23 with a verdict likely sometime at the end of February.

Only then, presumably, can CAS consider Bin Hammam's appeal against his FIFA ban. The likelihood of a judgment before the AFC election deadline closes is slim.

In the meantime, Bin Hammam will not be recovering the monies paid out by Jack Warner - remember him? - on the Qatari's behalf at the CFU's infamous election campaign conference in Port of Spain in May.

This has been clarified by FIFA after disciplinary action against nearly 30 delegates from nations who either accepted the "envelopes stuffed with cash" or, at the least, tried to keep quiet about what transpired.

> Bin Hammam will not recover monies paid out by Jack Warner

Some 11 Caribbean officials were banned for varying periods, five more reprimanded and six others warned after the inquiry undertaken by former US Federal Bureau of Investigation director Louis Freeh. Six others, including former FIFA vice-president Warner - who had been president of CFU and CONCACAF - escaped sanction because they quit their football roles before the completion of inquiries.

While FIFA has been praised for undertaking the disciplinary action it had come in for criticism for a lack of transparency over the differentials in sentences and, until now, a lack of information about monies recovered.

Warner had been prepared to distribute $40,000 per delegation on Bin Hammam's behalf. How much has been handed back, and the reasons for not returning it to Bin Hammam, have yet to be stated.

Zwanziger: stepping down as the DFB president

Giving up...Zwanziger

One of the great pillars of stability in European football down the years has been the German football federation (DFB). But the ground is shifting.

Theo Zwanziger, the lawyer assigned with the role of leading a major revision of the statutes of FIFA, has decided to stand down in October 2012 - a year early - as DFB president.

Zwanziger, who became a member of the FIFA executive committee at the start of June as a representative of UEFA in succession to Franz Beckenbauer, now looks set to be replaced at the DFB by former football journalist and general secretary Wolfgang Niersbach.

Zwanziger's reign has included outstanding hostings of the 2006 World Cup and the 2011 Women's World Cup. But on the negative side, there was a destabilising row with Joachim Low over the renewal of the coach's contract in the run-up to the 2010 World Cup and lately a squabble with vice-president Rainer Koch.

So has Zwanziger cleared the deck to concentrate on leading the important FIFA statutes revision - or will he decide that even this is not what he wants?

Platini: backing winter World Cup

UEFA president Michel Platini has come out ever more strongly in favour of a winter World Cup in 2022 in Qatar to avoid the blistering heat of the Gulf state's summer season.

The significance of Platini's comment is that he is current favourite to become president of FIFA if Sepp Blatter retires in 2015.

Platini's comments will certainly not endear him to some of the powerful leagues and associations within his own current European constituency, who would oppose seeing their traditional autumn-to-spring calendar, and promotional and broadcasting contracts, upset.

Hot and bothered...Platini

Platini told Al Jazeera that he was prepared to move Europe's club competitions to accommodate the switch to a cooler time of year. But he may not, of course, be UEFA president in four or five years time when a decision is needed.

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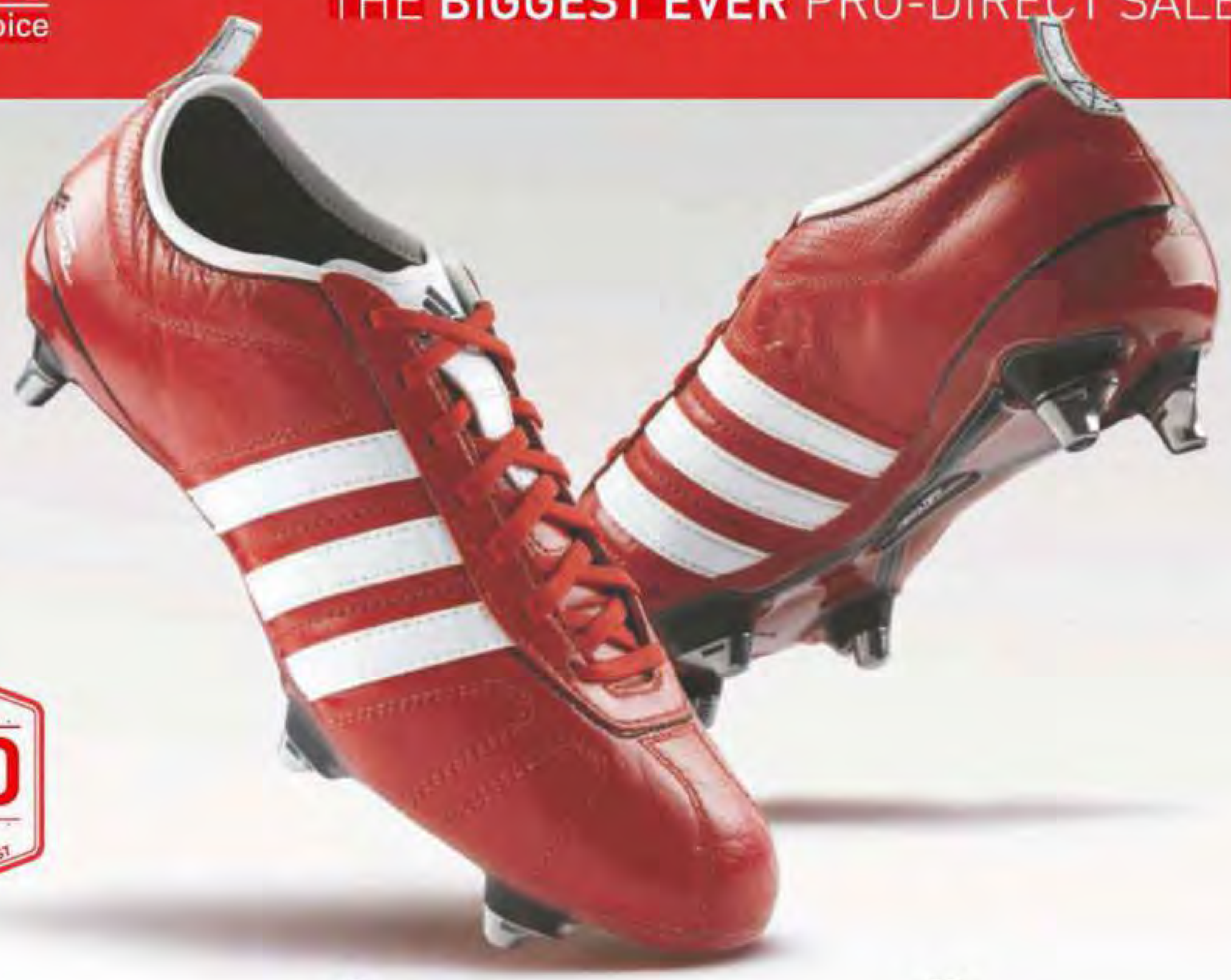

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FINALLY a snoring product that actually works!

Six out of 10 adults are affected by snoring. Could you be the one in your relationship who snores?

By Carolyn Clayton

In the middle of the night, who is it that really suffers? The snorer or the snoree? You know yourself that if you are the one being kept up by someone else's snoring it is incredibly annoying, especially when you tell them about the problem and they say they don't snore.

What is even more annoying is that surveys have shown that while men readily admit that they snore, they really don't care as long as they are the ones getting a good night's asleep.

But men, beware - snoring causes all sorts of health problems. And because snoring can causes a lack of good quality sleep for both the snorer and the snoree – you and your partner are both negatively affected.

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Committed...Borussia Dortmund's Sebastian Kehl (left) feels the full force of a determined Stephane Mbia of Marseille in the UEFA Champions League

Stars...Galaxy win the MLS Cup

ALGERIA

Opposition sued

A bill for $1 million has been sent to the Cameroon Football Federation after their national side failed to turn up for a friendly in Algiers on November 15.

Algeria are seeking payment after Cameroon's players refused to travel for the game following a row over appearance money.

ANTIGUA & BARBUDA

History maker

A goal against Haiti by Kerry Skepple put Antigua & Barbuda in the third-round stage of the World Cup qualifiers for the first time in their history.

ENGLAND

Rooney ban cut

Wayne Rooney will be available for England's final Euro group game next summer, against Ukraine, after a three-match ban for his sending-off against Montenegro in the qualifiers was reduced to two.

Everton midfielder Jack Rodwell and full-back Kyle Walker of Tottenham Hotspur made their senior debuts as second-half substitutes in England's 1-0 victory over world

Starting...Walker (right) and Rodwell deal with a Sweden attack

Internationals

2014 WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

AFRICA SECTION

● 5 finals places available

1st round

1st legs

Nov 11 - N'Djamena
Chad 1 (Labo 15)
Tanzania 2 (Ngasa 10, Bakari 80)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Ogunkolade (Nga)

Nov 11 - Mitsamiouli
Comoros 0
Mozambique 1 (Miro pen 56)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 3,000. **Ref:** Jane (Les)

Nov 11 - Djibouti
Djibouti 0
Namibia 4 (Bester 15, 69, Kaimbi 50, Urikhob 84)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 3,000. **Ref:** Bamlak (Eth)

Nov 11 - Malabo
Equatorial Guinea 2 (Juvenal pen 23, Randy pen 79)
Madagascar 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Otogo-Castane (Gab)

Nov 11 - Asmara
Eritrea 1 (Tekle 35)
Rwanda 1 (Uzamukunda 58)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 6,000. **Ref:** Keita (Mli)

Nov 11 - Bissau
Guinea-Bissau 1 (De Carvalho pen 37)
Togo 1 (Gakpe 32)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 3,000. **Ref:** Diedhiou (Sen)

Nov 11 - Maseru
Lesotho 1 (Ramabele 81)
Burundi 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 5,000. **Ref:** Shikongo (Nam)

Nov 11 - Sao Tome
Sao Tome e Principe 0
Congo 5 (Moussilou 2, Douniama 8, Malonga 32, Oniangue 55, Tchilimbou 70)
HT: 0-3. **Att:** 3,000. **Ref:** Ngbokaye (Cta)
Sent off: Neto de Ceita (Sao Tome) 88min; Malonga (Congo) 88min

Nov 11 - Roche Caiman
Seychelles 0
Kenya 3 (P Ochieng 41, Kimani 75, Oliech 81)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 2,000. **Ref:** Batte (Uga)

Nov 11 - Lobamba
Swaziland 1 (Shongwe 65)
DR Congo 3 (Kaluyituka 18, Mputu 24, Bokese 73)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 785. **Ref:** Sikazwe (Zam)

Nov 12 - Djibouti, Djibouti
Somalia 0
Ethiopia 0
Att: 3,000. **Ref:** Hassan Durouke (Dji)
Sent off: Alebachew (Ethiopia) 64min

Mauritius v Liberia: Mauritius withdrew, Liberia handed bye to 2nd round

2nd legs

Nov 15 - Bujumbura
Burundi 2 (Amissi 29, Ndikumana pen 88)
Lesotho 2 (Tale 16, Mothoana 22)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 7,200. **Ref:** Raphael (Mwi)
Lesotho 3-2 on agg

Nov 15 - Pointe Noire
Congo 1 (Nganga 56)
Sao Tome e Principe 1 (Dos Santos 50)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 12,000. **Ref:** Mahamat (Cha)
Congo 6-1 on agg

Nov 15 - Kinshasa
DR Congo 5 (Mputu 8, 49, Kaluyituka 46, 61, Ilunga 66)
Swaziland 1 (Shongwe 63)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 24,000. **Ref:** Moukoko (Cgo)
DR Congo 8-2 on agg

Nov 15 - Nairobi
Kenya 4 (Mandela 16, Oliech 36, Mulama 45+1, Wanyama 74)
Seychelles 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 5,000. **Ref:** Gomes (SAf)
Kenya 7-0 on agg

Nov 15 - Antananarivo
Madagascar 2 (Rajoarimanana 54, Ramanamahefa 90)
Equatorial Guinea 1 (Doualla Viera 24)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 5,000. **Ref:** Nunkoo (Mts)
Equatorial Guinea 3-2 on agg

Nov 15 - Maputo
Mozambique 4 (Domingues 26, Sitoe 45, Whiskey 59, Clesio 84)
Comoros 1 (Youssouf 72)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Ruzive (Zim)
Mozambique 5-1 on agg

Nov 15 - Windhoek
Namibia 4 (Isaacks 15, Kaimbi 34, 58, Urikhob 81)
Djibouti 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 2,145. **Ref:** Chirinda (Moz)
Namibia 8-0 on agg

Nov 15 - Kigali
Rwanda 3 (Karekezi 4, Iranzi 70, Bokota 79)
Eritrea 1 (Tedros 89)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Bondo (Bot)
Rwanda 4-2 on agg

Nov 15 - Dar es Salaam
Tanzania 0
Chad 1 (Labo 47)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 42,700. **Ref:** Nampiandraza (Mad)
Agg 2-2; Tanzania on away goals

Nov 15 - Lome
Togo 1 (Jonas og 3)
Guinea-Bissau 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 25,000. **Ref:** Mohamadou (Cam)
Togo 2-1 on agg

Nov 16 - Addis Abeba
Ethiopia 5 (Okwury 5, Bekele 62, 65, Kebede 87, 90+2)
Somalia 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 22,000. **Ref:** Kordi (Tun)
Ethiopia 5-0 on agg

2nd round draw

Teams ranked 1-28 qualified automatically for this round

Group A
Botswana, Central African Rep, Ethiopia, South Africa

Group B
Cape Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Sierra Leone, Tunisia

Group C
Gambia, Ivory Coast, Morocco, Tanzania

Group D
Ghana, Lesotho, Sudan, Zambia

Group E
Burkina Faso, Congo, Gabon, Niger

Group F
Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria

Group G
Egypt, Guinea, Mozambique, Zimbabwe

Group H
Algeria, Benin, Mali, Rwanda

Group I
Cameroon, DR Congo, Libya, Togo

Group J
Angola, Liberia, Senegal, Uganda

Games to be played June 1, 2012-Sep 10, 2013

● Group winners qualify for the 3rd round

3rd round

● The 10 qualifiers will be paired in 5 2-leg ties (to be played Oct 11-Nov 19, 2013), the winners of which will qualify for the finals

ASIA SECTION

● 4.5 finals places available

3rd round

Group A

Nov 11 - Doha, Qatar
Iraq 1 (Mahmoud 90+2)
China 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 5,000. **Ref:** Green (Aus)
Sent off: Zhang Linpeng (China) 85min

Nov 11 - Amman
Jordan 2 (Ibrahim 15, Deeb 65)
Singapore 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 19,000. **Ref:** Williams (Aus)

Nov 15 - Amman
Jordan 1 (Abdel Fattah 17)
Iraq 3 (Akram 55, 81, Munir 65)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 13,000. **Ref:** Albadwawi (UAE)

Nov 15 - Singapore
Singapore 0
China 4 (Yu Hai 42, Li Weifeng 55, Zheng Zheng 73, 82)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 5,474. **Ref:** Balideh (Qat)
Sent off: Huang Bowen (China) 67min

WC QUALS: ASIA – 3RD ROUND: GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Jordan (Q)	5	4	0	1	10	4	12
Iraq (Q)	5	4	0	1	7	3	12
China	5	2	0	3	7	5	6
Singapore	5	0	0	5	1	13	0

Remaining games
29.02.12: China v Jordan; Iraq v Singapore.

Group B

Nov 11 - Kuwait City
Kuwait 0
Lebanon 1 (El Ali 57)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 17,500. **Ref:** Kovalenko (Uzb)

Nov 11 - Dubai
United Arab Emirates 0
South Korea 2 (Lee Keun-ho 87, Park Chu-young 90+3)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 8,272. **Ref:** Irmatov (Uzb)
South Korea: Jung Sung-ryong - Hong Chul (Lee Seung-ki 63), Lee Jung-soo, Cha Du-ri, Kwak Tae-hwi, Hong Jeong-ho, Koo Ja-cheol, Lee Yong-rae, Seo Jung-jin (Lee Keun-ho 78), Ji Dong-won (Son Heung-min 46), Park Chu-young.

Nov 15 - Kuwait City
Kuwait 2 (F Al Enezi 49, W Abbas og 68)
United Arab Emirates 1 (Matar 18)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Al Hilali (Oma)

Nov 15 - Beirut
Lebanon 2 (Al Saadi 5, Atwi pen 31)
South Korea 1 (Koo Ja-cheol pen 20)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 35,000. **Ref:** Al Ghamdi (Sau)
South Korea: Jung Sung-ryong - Lee Jung-soo, Cha Du-ri, Lee Yong-rae, Kwak Tae-hwi, Hong Jeong-ho (Yoon Bit-garam 70), Koo Ja-cheol, Lee Seung-ki, Son Heung-min (Ji Dong-won 46), Seo Jung-jin (Nam Tae-hee 52), Lee Keun-ho.

WC QUALS: ASIA – 3RD ROUND: GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
South Korea	5	3	1	1	12	4	10
Lebanon	5	3	1	1	8	10	10
Kuwait	5	2	2	1	8	7	8
UAE	5	0	0	5	5	12	0

Remaining games
29.02.12: South Korea v Kuwait; UAE v Lebanon.

Group C

Nov 11 - Dushanbe
Tajikistan 0
Japan 4 (Konno 36, Okazaki 61, 90+2, Maeda 82)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 18,000. **Ref:** Kim (SKo)
Japan: Kawashima - Komano, Uchida (Inoha 88), Endo, Kagawa, K Nakamura (Kiyotake 86), Konno, Havenaar (Maeda 56), Hasebe, Yoshida, Okazaki.

Nov 11 - Tashkent
Uzbekistan 1 (Kapadze 49)
North Korea 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 27,525. **Ref:** El Haddad (Leb)
Uzbekistan: Nesterov - Haydarov, Djeparov, Ahmedov, Kapadze (Turaev 88), Denisov, Tuhtahujaev, Karpenko (Mulladjanov 55), Galiulin, Geynrikh, Shatskikh (Tursunov 75).

Nov 15 - Pyongyang
North Korea 1 (Pak Nam-chol 50)
Japan 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 50,000. **Ref:** Shukralla (Bhn)
Sent off: Jong Il-gwan (North Korea) 77min
Japan: Nishikawa - Inoha, Komano, Kurihara, Kiyotake (Lee 85), Hosogai, K Nakamura (Uchida 62), Konno, Hasebe, Maeda (Havenaar 77), Okazaki.

Nov 15 - Tashkent
Uzbekistan 3 (Tursunov 34, Ahmedov 60, Geynrikh 72)
Tajikistan 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 5,325. **Ref:** Zarouni (UAE)
Sent off: Rajabov (Tajikistan) 86min
Uzbekistan: Nesterov - Mulladjanov, Haydarov (Ismailov 80), Ahmedov, Nasimov (Bakaev 55), Tursunov, Kapadze (Djeparov 72), Denisov, Tuhtahujaev, Galiulin, Geynrikh.

champions Spain. Both started three days later in a 1-0 win against Sweden, in which Chelsea striker Daniel Sturridge made his first international appearance.

FRANCE

Defensive debuts

Defenders Laurent Koscielny of Arsenal and Valencia's Jeremy Mathieu made their debuts as France beat the USA 1-0 with a goal from Loic Remy. Second-half substitutes Olivier Giroud of Montpellier and Lyon defensive midfielder Maxime Gonalons also won their first caps.

INDONESIA

Deaths at Final

Two people were killed in a stampede before Malaysia's victory over Indonesia at the Southeast Asian Games Final in Jakarta.

Malaysia's under-23 Olympic side retained their title, beating the hosts 4-3 on penalties after drawing 1-1 in normal time.

ITALY

Buffon third highest

Juventus goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon won his 112th cap in the 1-0 defeat by Uruguay. Only Fabio Cannavaro (136) and Paolo Maldini (126) have played more times for Italy.

Tragedy...the SEA Games Final

KENYA

Nairobi hosts Cup

The 2012 CECAFA Cup, which attracts national sides from east and central Africa, plus other invited guests from the continent – will be held in Nairobi, Kenya.

WC QUALS: ASIA – 3RD ROUND: GROUP C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Uzbekistan (Q)	5	4	1	0	7	1	13
Japan (Q)	5	3	1	1	14	2	10
North Korea	5	2	0	3	2	3	6
Tajikistan*	5	0	0	5	0	17	0

**Tajikistan replaced Syria, who had beaten the Tajiks in the previous round but were subsequently expelled from the competition for fielding an ineligible player in both legs of that tie*

Remaining games
29.02.12: Japan v Uzbekistan; Tajikistan v N Korea.

Group D

Nov 11 - Muscat
Oman 1 (Ali 18)
Australia 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 4,500. **Ref:** Abdulnabi (Bhn)
Australia: Schwarzer - Neill, Williams (Emerton 72), Wilkshire, Holman, Jedinak, Valeri, McKay, Spiranovic, Kewell (Kruse 53), Kennedy.

Nov 11 - Riyadh
Saudi Arabia 3 (Hazazi 59, Al Fraidi 80, Noor pen 89)
Thailand 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 32,000. **Ref:** Liu (HK)
Sent off: Theerathon (Thailand) 90+3min

Nov 15 - Riyadh
Saudi Arabia 0
Oman 0
Att: 62,740. **Ref:** Torky (Irn)

Nov 15 - Bangkok
Thailand 0
Australia 1 (Holman 76)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 19,400. **Ref:** Mozaffari (Irn)
Australia: Schwarzer - Neill, Zullo, Emerton, Wilkshire, Holman (Kruse 81), Jedinak (Kilkenny 90), Valeri, McKay, Spiranovic, Kennedy (Brosque 85).

WC QUALS: ASIA – 3RD ROUND: GROUP D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Australia (Q)	5	4	0	1	9	3	12
Saudi Arabia	5	1	3	1	4	3	6
Oman	5	1	2	2	1	6	5
Thailand	5	1	1	3	4	6	4

Remaining games
29.02.12: Australia v Saudi Arabia; Oman v Thailand.

Group E

Nov 11 - Manama
Bahrain 1 (Al Ajami 45+1)
Iran 1 (Jabari 90+3)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 18,000. **Ref:** Bashir (Sin)
Iran: Rahmati - Mahini, Hosseini, Aghili, Nekounam, Khalatbary (Kazemian 61), Ansarifard (Ghazi 61), Rezaei (Meydavoudi 78), Teymourian, Jabari, Pouladi.

Nov 11 - Doha
Qatar 4 (Razak 30, Ibrahim pen 33, 64, Soria 90+2)
Indonesia 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 6,500. **Ref:** Basma (Syr)

Nov 15 - Jakarta
Indonesia 1 (Bambang 43)
Iran 4 (Meydavoudi 7, Jabari 19, Rezaei 24, Nekounam pen 72)
HT: 1-3. **Att:** 6,000. **Ref:** Tan (Chn)
Iran: Rahmati - Mahini, Hajsafy, Hosseini, Aghili, Nekounam, Meydavoudi (Khalatbary 70), Rezaei (Kazemian 46), Teymourian (Zare 63), Jabari, Ghazi.

Nov 15 - Doha
Qatar 0
Bahrain 0
Att: 10,509. **Ref:** Nishimura (Jap)

WC QUALS: ASIA – 3RD ROUND: GROUP E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Iran (Q)	5	3	2	0	15	3	11
Qatar	5	2	3	0	8	3	9
Bahrain	5	1	3	1	3	7	6
Indonesia	5	0	0	5	3	16	0

Remaining games
29.02.12: Bahrain v Indonesia; Iran v Qatar.

● Top 2 in each group qualify for 4th round

4th round

● The 10 qualifiers will be divided into 2 groups of 5 teams. The top 2 in both these groups qualify for the finals
● The 2 3rd-placed teams will meet in a 2-leg play-off, the winners of which will meet the 5th-placed South American team in a 2-leg play-off for a place in the finals

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CONCACAF SECTION

● 3.5 finals places available

2nd round

Group A

Nov 11 - San Cristobal
Dominican Republic 4 (Navarro 15, Ozuna 38, Rodriguez 63, Morillo 79)
Cayman Islands 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 1,000. **Ref:** Guerrero (Nic)

Nov 11 - Paramaribo
Surinam 1 (Esperance 81)
El Salvador 3 (Blanco 22, 58, E Sanchez 77)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 500. **Ref:** Brea (Cub)

Nov 14 - Georgetown
Cayman Islands 1 (M Ebanks 73)
Dominican Republic 1 (Garcia 41)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 1,750. **Ref:** Matthew (SKN)

Nov 15 - San Salvador
El Salvador 4 (Romero 33, 63, Burgos 77, 83)
Surinam 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 9,659. **Ref:** Santos (PR)

WC QUALS: CONCACAF – 2ND RND: GP A – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
El Salvador (Q)	6	6	0	0	20	5	18
Dominican Rep	6	2	2	2	12	8	8
Surinam	6	2	1	3	5	11	7
Cayman Is	6	0	1	5	2	15	1

Group B

Nov 11 - Hamilton
Bermuda 2 (K Smith pen 27, Steede 49)
Barbados 1 (Adamson 7)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 1,000. **Ref:** Barrios (Gtm)
Sent off: Boxhill (Barbados) 25min

Nov 11 - Georgetown
Guyana 2 (Shakes 10, L Cort 81)
Trinidad & Tobago 1 (K Jones 90+2)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 18,000. **Ref:** Wijngaarde (Sur)

*Nov 14 - Hamilton**
Barbados 1 (Grosvenor 90)
Bermuda 2 (Wells 46, K Smith pen 72)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 1,000. **Ref:** Moreno (Pan)
**Tie played in Bermuda*

Nov 15 - Port of Spain
Trinidad & Tobago 2 (K Jones 59, Peltier 65)
Guyana 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 2,000. **Ref:** Mejia (ESv)

WC QUALS: CONCACAF – 2ND RND: GP B – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Guyana (Q)	6	4	1	1	9	5	13
Trinidad & Tob	6	4	0	2	11	4	12
Bermuda	6	3	1	2	8	7	10
Barbados	6	0	0	6	2	14	0

Group C

Nov 11 - Managua
Nicaragua 1 (Leguias 57)
Dominica 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 2,100. **Ref:** Cruz (CR)

Nov 15 - Panama City
Panama 3 (Blackburn 7, Buitrago 21, Perez 84)
Dominica 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 6,000. **Ref:** Vaughn (USA)
Panama: Melgar - Baloy, Algandona, G Gomez, Thompson (Sanchez 66), Marines (Ruiz 62), Miller, Godoy, Buitrago, Blackburn (Perez 75), Cooper.

WC QUALS: CONCACAF – 2ND RND: GP C – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Panama (Q)	4	4	0	0	15	2	12
Nicaragua	4	2	0	2	5	7	6
Dominica	4	0	0	4	0	11	0

Bahamas withdrew before group games started

Group D

Nov 11 - Basseterre
St Kitts & Nevis 0
Canada 0
Att: 4,000. **Ref:** Bonilla (ESv)
Canada: Hirschfeld - Straith, Edgar, Klukowski, De Guzman, Johnson (Ricketts 60), Jackson, Simpson, Jazic, Beaulieu-Bourgault, De Rosario (Occean 80).

Nov 11 - Bayamon
St Lucia 0
Puerto Rico 4 (Arrieta 4, Ramos 14, 46, Cabrero 53)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 350. **Ref:** Holder (Cay)
Sent off: K Edward (St Lucia) 82min; Martinez (Puerto Rico) 82min

Nov 14 - Mayaguez
Puerto Rico 3 (Ramos 13, 86, Marrero 88)
St Lucia 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 1,050. **Ref:** Willett (A&B)

Nov 15 - Toronto
Canada 4 (Occean 28, De Rosario pen 36, Simpson 45+3, Ricketts 88)
St Kitts & Nevis 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 10,235. **Ref:** Cerdas (CR)
Canada: Stamatopoulos - Ledgerwood (Attakora 70), Straith, Edgar, Morgan, Bernier (Beaulieu-Bourgault 81), Johnson, Simpson, Occean (Jackson 70), De Rosario, Ricketts.

WC QUALS: CONCACAF – 2ND RND: GP D – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Canada (Q)	6	4	2	0	18	1	14
Puerto Rico	6	2	3	1	8	4	9
St Kitts & N'vis	6	1	4	1	6	8	7
St Lucia	6	0	1	5	4	23	1

Group E

Nov 11 - Belmopan
Belize 1 (McCaulay 16)
St Vincent & The Grenadines 1 (Stewart 13)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 300. **Ref:** Skeete (Bds)
Sent off: Trimmingham (St Vincent & G) 89min

Nov 11 - Guatemala City
Guatemala 3 (Garcia 1, 30, Padilla 44)
Grenada 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 13,710. **Ref:** Brizan (T&T)

Nov 15 - St George's
Grenada 1 (S Rennie pen 37)
Guatemala 4 (Mark og 66, og 90+2, Thompson 78, Ramirez 84)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 200. **Ref:** Angela (Aru)
Sent off: Langaigne (Grenada) 62min

Nov 15 - Kingstown
St Vincent & The Grenadines 0
Belize 2 (McCaulay 75, pen 78)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 500. **Ref:** Thomas (Jam)

WC QUALS: CONCACAF – 2ND RND: GP E – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Guatemala (Q)	6	6	0	0	19	3	18
Belize	6	2	1	3	9	10	7
St Vincent & G	6	1	2	3	4	12	5
Grenada	6	1	1	4	7	14	4

Group F

Nov 11 - St John's
Antigua & Barbuda 1 (Skepple 82)
Haiti 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 8,000. **Ref:** Pineda (Hnd)

Nov 11 - Frederiksted
US Virgin Islands 0
Curacao 3 (Siberie 8, 13, Bito 26)
HT: 0-3. **Att:** 210. **Ref:** Navarro (Can)

Nov 15 - Willemstad
Curacao 6 (Carmelia 33, 78, Siberie 39, 65, Espacia 73, Cijntje 89)
US Virgin Islands 1 (Cornelius 50)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 2,000. **Ref:** Legister (Jam)
Sent off: Josephia (Curacao) 42min

Nov 15 - Port-au-Prince
Haiti 2 (Aveska 60, Belfort Fils 65)
Antigua & Barbuda 1 (T Thomas 9)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 3,000. **Ref:** Toledo (USA)

WC QUALS: CONCACAF – 2ND RND: GP F – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Antigua & B (Q)	6	5	0	1	26	5	15
Haiti	6	4	1	1	21	6	13
Curacao	6	2	1	3	15	13	7
US Virgin Is	6	0	0	6	2	40	0

● Group winners qualified for the 3rd round

3rd round draw

The top 6 ranked teams (Costa Rica, Cuba, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico and the United States) qualified automatically for this round

Group A
Antigua & Barbuda, Guatemala, Jamaica, United States

Group B
Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guyana, Mexico

Group C
Canada, Cuba, Honduras, Panama

Games to be played June 8-Oct 16, 2012

● Top 2 in each group qualify for the 4th round

Cheers...the departed Kranjcar

MONTENEGRO

Drink problem

Dejan Savicevic, the president of the Football Association of Montenegro, has revealed that the country's former national coach Zlatko Kranjcar was sacked in September because he "had a problem which we tried to hide, the alcohol problem".

Kranjcar, who is the father of Tottenham Hotspur midfielder Niko Kranjcar, was replaced by Branko Brnovic.

NIGERIA

Brothers on target

The Uche brothers, Kalu and Ikechukwu, were both on the scoresheet as Nigeria beat Zambia 2-0 to give Stephen Keshi his first win since taking over as coach of the national side.

The game also saw skipper Joseph Yobo collect a record-equalling 86th cap for his country.

NORWAY

Century for Riise

Fulham defender John Arne Riise made his 100th international appearance in Norway's 4-1 defeat away to Wales.

Loyal servant...Riise

INTERNATIONALS

4th round

- The 6 qualifiers will form a single group (games to be played Feb 6-Oct 15, 2013), with the top 3 qualifying for the finals
- The 4th-placed team will meet the Oceania section winners in a 2-leg play-off for a place in the finals

EUROPE SECTION

- 13 finals places available

Draw

Group A
Belgium, Croatia, Macedonia, Scotland, Serbia, Wales

Group B
Armenia, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Italy, Malta

Group C
Austria, Faroe Islands, Germany, Kazakhstan, Republic of Ireland, Sweden

Group D
Andorra, Estonia, Holland, Hungary, Romania, Turkey

Group E
Albania, Cyprus, Iceland, Norway, Slovenia, Switzerland

Group F
Azerbaijan, Israel, Luxembourg, Northern Ireland, Portugal, Russia

Group G
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Greece, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Slovakia

Group H
England, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, San Marino, Ukraine

Group I
Belarus, Finland, France, Georgia, Spain

Games to be played Sep 7, 2012-Oct 15, 2013

- The 9 group winners will qualify for the finals
- The 8 runners-up with the best record will be paired in 4 2-leg play-offs, the winners of which will also qualify for the finals

OCEANIA SECTION

- 0.5 finals places available

1st round

Games played in Apia, Samoa

Nov 22
American Samoa 2 (R Ott 44, S Luani 74)
Tonga 1 (Feao 87)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 150. **Ref:** Achari (Fij)

Nov 22
Cook Islands 2 (Best 36, 85)
Samoa 3 (L Gosche 20, 37, A Bell 90+2)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 600. **Ref:** O'Leary (NZ)

Nov 24
American Samoa 1 (S Luani 24)
Cook Islands 1 (Luvu og 62)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 300. **Ref:** George (Van)

Nov 24
Samoa 1 (Easthope pen 43)
Tonga 1 (Taufahema 81)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 180. **Ref:** Jacques (Tah)

Nov 26
Tonga 2 (Maamaloa 27, Falatau 90+1)
Cook Islands 1 (Harmon 35)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 200. **Ref:** Assiene-Ambassa (NC)

Nov 26
Samoa 1 (Malo 90)
American Samoa 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 800. **Ref:** O'Leary (NZ)

WC QUALS: OCEANIA – 1ST ROUND – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Samoa (Q)	3	2	1	0	5	3	7
Tonga	3	1	1	1	4	4	4
Amer Samoa	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Cook Islands	3	0	1	2	4	6	1

- Group winners qualified for the 2nd round

2nd round draw

The top 7 ranked teams (Fiji, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tahiti and Vanuatu) qualified automatically for this round

Group A
New Caledonia, Samoa, Tahiti, Vanuatu

Group B
Fiji, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands

Games to be played June 1-12, 2012, in Fiji

- The top 2 in each group qualify for the 3rd round

3rd round

- The 4 qualifiers will form a single group (games to be played Sep 7, 2012-Mar 26, 2013), the winner of which will meet the 4th-placed CONCACAF team in a 2-leg play-off for a place in the finals

SOUTH AMERICA SECTION

- 5.5 finals places available, one of which goes automatically to hosts Brazil

Nov 11 - Buenos Aires
Argentina 1 (Lavezzi 60)
Bolivia 1 (Martins 56)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 27,592. **Ref:** Vera (Ecu)
Argentina: Romero - Zabaleta, N Burdisso, Demichelis, C Rodriguez, Gago, Mascherano (Sosa 80), Alvarez (Lavezzi 59), Messi, Higuain, Pastore.
Bolivia: Arias - Vargas, Mendez, Ronald Rivero, L Gutierrez, Rojas (Segovia 49), Flores, Robles, Cardozo, Escobar (Chavez 80), Martins (Andaveris 76).

Nov 11 - Barranquilla
Colombia 1 (Guarin 11)
Venezuela 1 (F Feltscher 79)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 43,953. **Ref:** Ponce (Ecu)
Colombia: Ospina - Vallejo, L Perea, Yepes, Armero, Pabon (Marrugo 76), Guarin, Bolivar, Rodriguez (D Moreno 90+1), Gutierrez (Quintero 85), J Martinez.
Venezuela: Vega - Rosales, Amorebieta, Vizcarrondo, Cichero, Rincon (Guerra 63), Arango, C Gonzalez, A Flores, Fedor (S Rondon 57), Moreno (F Feltscher 70).

Nov 11 - Asuncion
Paraguay 2 (C Riveros 47, Veron 58)
Ecuador 1 (Rojas 90+2)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 11,173. **Ref:** Buitrago (Col)
Paraguay: D Barreto - Bonet, Da Silva, Veron, R Ortiz, Ayala, V Caceres, C Riveros, Estigarribia (Samudio 79), Haedo Valdez (Caballero 73), Barrios (Dos Santos 63).
Ecuador: Banguera - Achilier, Morante, Erazo, W Ayovi, Noboa, Saritama (Rojas 76), Valencia, Suarez (Montero 59), Borja (Mendez 70), J Ayovi.

Nov 11 - Montevideo
Uruguay 4 (Suarez 42, 45, 68, 74)
Chile 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 40,500. **Ref:** Baldassi (Arg)
Uruguay: Muslera - Caceres, Lugano, Godin, A Pereira, A Gonzalez (Eguren 69), Perez, Arevalo, Ramirez (Abreu 57), Suarez (C Rodriguez 75), Cavani.
Chile: Bravo - M Gonzalez, Ponce, P Contreras, Isla, Medel, Diaz (Mirosevic 60), Campos, Fernandez, Vargas (Canales 71), Suazo (Paredes 60).

Nov 15 - Santiago
Chile 2 (P Contreras 28, Campos 86)
Paraguay 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 44,726. **Ref:** Lopes (Bra)
Chile: Bravo - M Gonzalez, Ponce, P Contreras, Isla, Medel, Aranguiz, Fernandez (Mirosevic 86), Sanchez, Suazo (Campos 70), Vargas (Paredes 78).
Paraguay: D Barreto - Bonet (Perez 46), Veron, Manzur, Samudio, Ayala, Aquino, C Riveros, Estigarribia (O Cardozo 75), Dos Santos (E Benitez 62), Haedo Valdez.

Nov 15 - Barranquilla
Colombia 1 (Pabon 44)
Argentina 2 (Messi 67, Aguero 84)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 49,600. **Ref:** Fagundes (Bra)
Colombia: Ospina - Zuniga, Yepes, A Mosquera, Armero, Bolivar, Aguilar (D Arias 76), Rodriguez, Pabon (D Moreno 67), Ramos, J Martinez (Quintero 76).
Argentina: Romero - Zabaleta, Fernandez, N Burdisso (Desabato 37), C Rodriguez, Sosa, Mascherano, Brana, Guinazu (Aguero 46), Messi, Higuain (Gago 85).

Nov 15 - Quito
Ecuador 2 (Mendez 69, Benitez 88)
Peru 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 34,481. **Ref:** Larrionda (Uru)
Ecuador: Banguera - Paredes, Campos, Erazo (Morante 37), W Ayovi, Castillo, Saritama (Minda 82), Valencia, Rojas (Mendez 46), Benitez, J Ayovi.
Peru: R Fernandez - Revoredo, Acasiete, Ramos, Vilchez, Retamozo, Lobaton (Guevara 46), Vargas, Farfan (Advincula 67), Pizarro (Chiroque 62), Guerrero.

Nov 15 - San Cristobal
Venezuela 1 (Vizcarrondo 25)
Bolivia 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 33,351. **Ref:** Buckley (Per)
Venezuela: Vega - Rosales, Vizcarrondo, Amorebieta, Cichero, C Gonzalez (F Feltscher 62), Rincon, Alvarez (Lucena 71), Arango, Maldonado (R Feltscher 78), S Rondon.
Bolivia: Arias - Vargas, Raldes, Ronald Rivero, L Gutierrez, Segovia (Arce 59), Robles, Chavez, Cardozo (Andaveris 77), Escobar (Campos 59), Martins.

WC QUALS: SOUTH AMERICA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Uruguay	3	2	1	0	9	3	7
Argentina	4	2	1	1	7	4	7
Venezuela	4	2	1	1	3	3	7
Ecuador	3	2	0	1	5	2	6
Chile	4	2	0	2	7	10	6
Colombia	3	1	1	1	4	4	4
Paraguay	4	1	1	2	3	6	4
Peru	3	1	0	2	4	6	3
Bolivia	4	0	1	3	4	8	1

Games to be played Oct 7, 2011-Oct 15, 2013; each team will play 16 games (8x2)

- The top 4 qualify for the finals
- The 5th-placed team will meet the winners of the Asia section play-off in a 2-leg play-off for a place in the finals

KEY TO TABLES
(Q) = qualified for next round

EURO 2012

Qualifying play-offs

1st legs

Nov 11 - Zenica
Bosnia-Herzegovina 0
Portugal 0
Att: 12,352. **Ref:** Webb (Eng)
Bosnia-Herzegovina: Begovic - Lulic, Jahic, Spahic, Salihovic (Ibisevic 68), Medunjanin (Maletic 67), Rahimic, Pjanic, Misimovic (Ibricic 86), Zahirovic, Dzeko.
Portugal: Rui Patricio - Joao Pereira, Pepe, Bruno Alves, Fabio Coentrao, Miguel Veloso, Joao Moutinho, Raul Meireles (Ruben Micael 82), Cristiano Ronaldo, Helder Postiga (Hugo Almeida 65), Nani.

Nov 11 - Prague
Czech Republic 2 (Pilar 63, Sivok 90+2)
Montenegro 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 14,560. **Ref:** Atkinson (Eng)
Czech Republic: Cech - Gebre Selassie, Sivok, Kadlec, Pudil, Plasil, Jiracek, Rezek (Pospech 81), Rosicky, Pilar (Kolar 90), Pekhart (Lafata 90+3).
Montenegro: M Bozovic - Pavicevic, Dzudovic, Savic, Jovanovic, Drincic, Pekovic (Zverotic 80), Vukcevic (Delibasic 89), Jovetic, Damjanovic (V Bozovic 61), Vucinic.

Nov 11 - Tallinn
Estonia 0
Republic of Ireland 4 (Andrews 13, Walters 67, Keane 71, pen 87)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 10,500. **Ref:** Kassai (Hun)
Estonia: Pareiko - Enar Jaager, Stepanov, Piiroja, Klavan, Kink (Purje 68), Dmitrijev, Vunk (Lindpere 61), Kruglov, Vassiljev, Ahjupera (Voskoboinikov 55). *Sent off: Stepanov 35min, Piiroja 76min.*
Rep of Ireland: Given - Kelly, Dunne, St Ledger, Ward, Duff (S Hunt 73), Whelan (Fahey 78), Andrews, McGeady, Keane, Walters (Cox 83).

Nov 11 - Istanbul
Turkey 0
Croatia 3 (Olic 2, Mandzukic 32, Corluka 51)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 42,863. **Ref:** Brych (Ger)
Turkey: Volkan Demirel - Gokhan Gonul (Gokhan Tore 46), Giray, Egemen, Hakan Balta, Hamit Altintop, Sabri, Selcuk Inan (Mehmet Topal 69), Emre Belozoglu, Arda, Burak (Umut 81).
Croatia: Pletikosa - Corluka, Schildenfeld, Simunic, Vida, Srna, Dujmovic, Rakitic (Pranjic 83), Modric, Olic (Jelavic 85), Mandzukic (Eduardo 90).

2nd legs

Nov 15 - Zagreb
Croatia 0
Turkey 0
Att: 26,371. **Ref:** Proenca (Por)
Croatia 3-0 on agg
Croatia: Pletikosa - Vida, Schildenfeld, Simunic, Pranjic, Srna, Modric, Vukojevic (Eduardo 88), Rakitic, Olic (Perisic 62), Mandzukic (Jelavic 78).
Turkey: Sinan - Serkan, Egemen, Omer, Ismail, Hamit Altintop, Selcuk Sahin, Selcuk Inan, Caner (Gokhan Tore 36), Umut (Halil Altintop 71), Kazim-Richards.

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RUSSIA

Another clean sheet

Vyacheslav Malafeev extended his unbeaten run at international level to 606 minutes without conceding a goal during Russia's friendly match against Greece.

The Zenit goalkeeper had been substituted by the time the visitors equalised late on in the 1-1 draw.

No way past...Malafeev's long unbeaten international run continues

SOUTH AFRICA

New Cup format

A total of 46 countries have entered the 2013 African Nations Cup qualifiers which start in January and will end with 15 teams joining hosts South Africa in the finals.

For the first time since 1990, all qualifying matches will be played on a knockout basis due to the short time between the 2012 finals and 2013 competition as CAF switch the tournament from every even year to every odd year.

There will be two ties in the first round, followed by a further 14 in the second round. The 14 winners of the second-round ties will then be joined by the 16 finalists from the 2012 finals, with the winners of those two-leg ties going to the finals in South Africa.

Nov 15 - Podgorica
Montenegro 0
Czech Republic 1 (Jiracek 81)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 12,000. **Ref:** Rizzoli (Ita)
Czech Republic 3-0 on agg
Montenegro: M Bozovic - Pavicevic, Dzudovic, Savic, V Bozovic (Djalovic 80), Beciraj (Delibasic 58), Drincic, Zverotic, Damjanovic (Vukcevic 76), Vucinic, Jovetic.
Czech Republic: Cech - Gebre Selassie, Hubnik, Sivok, Kadlec, Jiracek, Plasil, Rezek (Pospech 60), Rosicky, Pilar (Kolar 69), Pekhart (Baros 84).

Nov 15 - Lisbon
Portugal 6 (Cristiano Ronaldo 7, 53, Nani 24, Helder Postiga 71, 82, Miguel Veloso 80)
Bosnia-Herzegovina 2 (Misimovic pen 41, Spahic 65)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 47,728. **Ref:** Stark (Ger)
Portugal 6-2 on agg
Portugal: Rui Patricio - Joao Pereira, Pepe, Bruno Alves, Fabio Coentrao, Raul Meireles (Ruben Micael 64), Miguel Veloso, Joao Moutinho, Nani (Ricardo Quaresma 83), Helder Postiga (Carlos Martins 84), Cristiano Ronaldo.
Bosnia-Herzegovina: Begovic - Lulic, Spahic, Jahic, Papac, Rahimic (Maletic 57), Zahirovic, Misimovic, Medunjanin, Pjanic (Besic 65), Dzeko.
Sent off: Lulic 54min.

Nov 15 - Dublin
Republic of Ireland 1 (Ward 32)
Estonia 1 (Vassiljev 57)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 51,151. **Ref:** Kuipers (Hol)
Republic of Ireland 5-1 on agg
Rep of Ireland: Given - O'Shea, Dunne, St Ledger, Ward, Duff (Fahey 79), Whelan, Andrews, S Hunt (McGeady 58), Keane (Cox 67), Doyle.
Estonia: Londak - Enar Jaager, Rahn, Kruglov (S Puri 18), Klavan, Teniste, Vunk, Vassiljev, Saag, Voskoboinikov (Purje 73), Lindpere (Kink 54).

LG CUP

In Marrakech, Morocco

Nov 11
Cameroon 3 (Enoh 31, Angbwa 35, Eto'o 82)
Sudan 1 (Tahir pen 74)
HT: 2-0

Nov 11
Morocco 0
Uganda 1 (Sserumaga 47)
HT: 0-0

Nov 13
Morocco 1 (Amrabat 90)
Cameroon 1 (Eto'o 73)
HT: 0-0
Cameroon 4-2 on pens
Morocco: Amsif - Carcela (Amrabat 46), Kharja, Assaidi (Taarabt 46), Hadji, Belhanda, Basser, Alioui (Boussoufa 46), Boukhriss, El Kaddouri, Hermach.
Cameroon: N'Dy Assembe - Angbwa, Mandjeck, Nounkeu, Bedimo, Song (Makoun 83), Enoh, Nguemo, Aboubakar (Salli 64), Ntsama (Zoua 65), Eto'o.

Nov 13
Sudan 0
Uganda 0
Uganda 3-2 on pens

LG CUP – FINAL

	P	W	WP	LP	L	F	A	Pts
Cameroon	2	1	1	0	0	4	2	5
Uganda	2	1	1	0	0	1	0	5
Morocco	2	0	0	1	1	1	2	1
Sudan	2	0	0	1	1	1	3	1

WP = win on pens (2pts); LP = loss on pens (1pt)

FRIENDLIES

Saturday, November 5
Nov 5 - Osbourn
Antigua & Barbuda 0
Guadeloupe 0

Thursday, November 10
Nov 10 - Libreville
Gabon 0
Brazil 2 (Sandro 12, Hernanes 35)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Hlungwani (SAf)
Gabon: Ovono - Moundounga, Ecuele Manga, Ebanega, Moussono, Palun (Moubamba 78), Poko (Mbanagoye 86), Madinda, P-E Aubameyang, Mouloungui (Ngema 73), Meye (Cousin 62).
Brazil: Diego Alves - Fabio (Alex Sandro 46), Luisao, David Luiz, Adriano Correia, Sandro (Lucas Leiva 57), Elias (Thiago Silva 86), Hernanes, Bruno Cesar (Willian 71), Jonas (Dudu 76), Hulk (Kleber 70).

Friday, November 11
Nov 11 - Tirana
Albania 0
Azerbaijan 1 (Aliyev 22)
HT: 0-1
Albania: Hidi - Lila, Dallku, Teli, Agolli, Cana, Bakaj (Januzi 72), Hyka, Roshi (Kapllani 88), Bogdani (Vila 46), Salihi (Muzaka 78).
Azerbaijan: Popovic - R F Sadygov, Melikov (Allahverdiyev 55), Abishov, Levin, Chertoganov (Amirguliev 79), Budak, M Huseynov, Subasic (Mamadov 74), Nadirov (Hajiyev 64), Aliyev.

Nov 11 - Liege
Belgium 2 (Van Buyten 11, Cocis og 43)
Romania 1 (D Niculae 65)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Ennjimi (Fra)
Belgium: Gillet - Vanden Borre, Kompany, Van Buyten, Vertonghen, Witsel, Fellaini, Defour (Nainggolan 79), Chadli (Vossen 66), Mirallas (Dembele 66), Mertens (De Bruyne 79).
Romania: Tatarusanu - Luchin (Pleasca 77; Gaman 85), Chiriches (Papp 70), Golan, Rat, Cocis, Lazar (Torje 46), Pintilii, Varga (Tanase 46), Stancu (Mazilu 46), D Niculae.

Nov 11 - Saint-Leu-La-Foret, France
Burkina Faso 1 (Bance 55)
Mali 1 (S Keita 47)
HT: 0-0

Nov 11 - Larnaca
Cyprus 1 (Christofi 59)
Scotland 2 (Miller 23, Mackie 56)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 2,000. **Ref:** Levi (Isr)
Cyprus: Georgallides (Kissas 46) - Merkis, Alexandrou (Katsis 69), Demetriou (Siells 46), Parpas (Nicolaou 58), Satsias, Dobrasinovic (Vasilou 74), Solomou, Avraam (Mitidis 46), Christofi, Efrem.
Scotland: McGregor - Whittaker, G Caldwell, Berra, Bardsley (Crainey 74), Mackie (Rhodes 87), Cowie, D Fletcher (McArthur 63), Morrison, Robson (Conway 80), Miller (Mackail-Smith 63).

Nov 11 - Copenhagen
Denmark 2 (Bendtner 35, Krohn-Dehli 80)
Sweden 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 18,057. **Ref:** Moen (Nor)
Denmark: T Sorensen - Jacobsen, Bjelland (Okore 63), Agger, S Poulsen, Zimling (C Poulsen 83), Eriksen (Schone 57), Kvist, Rommedahl (Wass 46), Krohn-Dehli, Bendtner (N Jorgensen 71).
Sweden: Wiland - Lustig (Granqvist 63), Mellberg, J Olsson, Safari, A Svensson (Holmen 85), Kallstrom (R Elm 46), S Larsson, Elmander (Toivonen 57), Bajrami (Wilhelmsson 46), Ibrahimovic (Gerndt 64).

Nov 11 - Paris
France 1 (Remy 72)
United States 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 70,018. **Ref:** Koukoulakis (Gre)
France: Lloris - Debuchy, Rami, Koscielny, Mathieu, Menez, A Diarra, M'Vila (Gonalons 60), Ribery (Remy 64), Benzema (Martin 65), Gameiro (Giroud 60).
United States: Howard - Cherundolo, Goodson, Bocanegra, Chandler, Edu (Buddle 77), Beckerman (Jones 66), Dempsey, Shea (Beasley 71), Williams (F Johnson 71), Altidore.

Nov 11 - Tbilisi
Georgia 2 (Kobakhidze 36, Ananidze pen 39)
Moldova 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Aliev (Aze)
Georgia: Loria - Maisuradze (Ganugrava 53), Khubutia (Grigalashvili 86), Kashia, Amisulashvili, Khizanishvili (Janelidze 86), Kobakhidze, Grigalava, Gelashvili (Guruli 64), Ananidze (Gorgiashvili 58), Dvalishvili (Modebadze 56).
Sent off: Kobakhidze 75min.
Moldova: Gaiduchevici - Armas, Golovatenco, Bolohan (Cascaval 85), Epureanu, Bulgaru (Potirniche 85), Ivanov, Cebotaru (Pisla 78), Zmeu (Doros 30), Suvorov (Bugaiov 46), Ovseannicov (Catan 67). *Sent off: Armas 75min.*

Nov 11 - Piraeus
Greece 1 (Katsouranis 60)
Russia 1 (Shirokov 2)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 5,000. **Ref:** Chapron (Fra)
Greece: Tzorvas - Torosidis, Holebas, A Papadopoulos, Papastathopoulos, Katsouranis (Makos 88), Karagounis (Tziolis 56), Fotakis (Limberopoulos 80), Samaras (Charisteas 56), Salpingidis (Kone 68), Gekas (Mitroglou 77).
Russia: Malafeev (Shunin 46) - Anyukov, V Berezutsky (A Berezutsky 46), Ignashevich, Zhirkov (Shishkin 67), Denisov, Shirokov (Bilyaletdinov 84), Zyryanov (Glushakov 79), Arshavin, Dzagoev, Dzyuba (Kokorin 46).

Nov 11 - Mantes-La-Ville, France
Guinea 1 (Feindouno pen 89)
Senegal 4 (Ndaw 12, S Camara 26, N Ndiaye pen 30, M B Diouf 71)
HT: 0-3
Senegal: K Ndiaye - Faty (Gassama 46), M Thioune (K Thioune 54), Sane, Sall, Tavarez (Gueye 46), Ndaw, Ndoye, S Camara, N Ndiaye (P K Diop 46), Ba (M B Diouf 46).

Nov 11 - Amsterdam
Holland 0
Switzerland 0
Att: 47,500. **Ref:** Eriksson (Swe)
Holland: Stekelenburg - Boulahrouz, Heitinga, Mathijsen, Braafheid, Kuyt, N De Jong, Sneijder, Van der Vaart (Strootman 67), Babel (L De Jong 80), Van Persie.
Switzerland: Benaglio - Lichtsteiner, Djourou, Von Bergen, Rodriguez, Shaqiri (Fernandes 76), Inler, Dzemaili, F Frei (D Degen 81), Xhaka (Costanzo 87), Mehmedi.

Nov 11 - Budapest
Hungary 5 (Priskin 10, 20, Dzsudzsak 76, Koman 79, Feczesin 89)
Liechtenstein 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 23,000. **Ref:** Balaj (Rom)
Hungary: Bogdan (Kiraly 81) - Lazar, Korcsmar (Vanczak 62), Juhasz, Kadar, Gera (Czvitkovics 70), Hajnal (Elek 62), Tozser (Nemeth 62), Dzsudzsak, Priskin (Koman 62), Feczesin.
Liechtenstein: Jehle (Bicer 46) - Michael Stocklasa (Quintans 65), Rechsteiner, Oehri, Martin Stocklasa, T Beck (F Eberle 84), M Frick (M Christen 83), Burgmeier, M Buchel (Wieser 46), N Hasler (L Eberle 88), Polverino.

Nov 11 - Queretaro
Mexico 2 (Salcido 2, J Hernandez pen 88)
Serbia 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Lopez (Gtm)
Mexico: Talavera - F Rodriguez, Salcido, Moreno, I Castro, Juarez (Magallon 90), Zavala (Molina 90), Guardado (Aquino 86), Barrera (Andrade 63), G Dos Santos (Naelson 52), J Hernandez (Peralta 89).
Serbia: Stojkovic - Ninkov (Tomovic 83), Kolarov, Rajkovic, Ivanovic, Kacar, Kuzmanovic, Ninkovic (Petrovic 77), Krasic (Jankovic 63), Jovanovic (Ljajic 68), Zigic (Mrdja 73; Kaludjerovic 79).
Sent off: Kolarov 86min.

Nov 11 - Panama City
Panama 2 (G Gomez pen 25, Perez 27)
Costa Rica 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Garcia (Mex)
Panama: Penedo - Rodriguez, Machado, Miller, Baloy, G Gomez, Cooper, Perez, Ruiz (Blackburn 66), Sanchez (Buitrago 90), Quintero (Godoy 87).
Costa Rica: Navas - Myrie (Salvatierra 54), Umana, Miller, Diaz, J L Lopez, Azofeifa (Barrantes 60), Hernandez (Cubero 80), Oviedo (Brenes 58), W Parks, Ruiz (Campbell 67).

Nov 11 - Wroclaw
Poland 0
Italy 2 (Balotelli 30, Pazzini 60)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 42,000. **Ref:** Duhamel (Fra)
Poland: Szczesny - Piszczek, Perquis (Wasilewski 68), Glowacki, Wawrzyniak, Murawski (Dudka 80), Polanski (Matuszczyk 65), Blaszczykowski, Obraniak (Pawel Brozek 56), Peszko (A Mierzejewski 65), R Lewandowski.
Italy: Buffon - Abate, Ranocchia, Chiellini, Criscito (Ogbonna 77), De Rossi (Thiago Motta 46), Pirlo (Pepe 46), Marchisio (Matri 61), Montolivo (Nocerino 61), Pazzini (Aquilani 61), Balotelli.

Nov 11 - Kiev
Ukraine 3 (Yarmolenko 28, Konoplyanka 36, Nazarenko 45)
Germany 3 (Kroos 38, Rolfes 65, Muller 77)
HT: 3-1. **Att:** 69,720. **Ref:** Velasco Carballo (Spa)
Ukraine: Rybka - Butko, Rakitskyi, Kucher, Selin, Konoplyanka (Fedetskyi 90), Tymoshchuk, Yarmolenko (Aliyev 82), Bezus (Nazarenko 39), Shevchenko (Gai 67), Milevskyi (Devic 66).
Germany: Zieler - Boateng, Hummels, Badstuber, Trasch (Schurrle 46), Khedira (Rolfes 46), Kroos (L Bender 87), Aogo, Ozil (Podolski 66), Gotze (Muller 66), Gomez (Cacau 83).

Saturday, November 12
Nov 12 - Blida
Algeria 1 (Boudebouz 43)
Tunisia 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Laachiri (Mor)
Algeria: Zemmamouche (Doukha 46) - Meftah (Hachoud 83), Medjani, Yahia, Belhadj, Yebda (Guedioura 72), Lemmouchia, Lacen, Boudebouz (Tedjar 74), Soudani (Aoudia 58), Ghilas (Bouazza 54).
Tunisia: Jeridi - Haggui, Iffa (Boussaidi 60), Abdennour, Gharbi, Msakni (Chedli 46), Ragued, Ben Yahia (Chikhaoui 65), Dhaouadi, Khelifa (Chermiti 72), Allagui (Jemaa 54).

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SWEDEN

English visitors

Erik Hamren's national side will get a chance to avenge November's 1-0 loss to England at Wembley when the two sides meet again on November 14, 2012, in a friendly international to mark the opening of Stockholm's new 50,000-capacity Swedbank Arena.

On song...Suarez

URUGUAY

Four for Suarez

Luis Suarez became the first player to score four times in a single World Cup game for Uruguay. The Liverpool striker helped himself to all of his country's goals in their 4-0 qualifying victory over Chile.

Suarez has now scored 26 goals in 52 games for his country.

USA

Skipper's ton

National team captain Carlos Bocanegra made his 100th appearance as the USA won 3-2 away to Slovenia with goals from Edson Buddle, Clint Dempsey and Jozy Altidore.

Dempsey's goal was his 24th for his country, making him the US' joint-fourth top scorer of all-time.

In control...Bocanegra (in red)

INTERNATIONALS

Nov 12 - London
England 1 (Lampard 49)
Spain 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 87,189. **Ref:** De Bleeckere (Blg)
England: Hart - G Johnson, Lescott, Jagielka, A Cole, Walcott (Downing 46), Jones (Rodwell 56), Parker (Walker 85), Milner (A Johnson 76), Lampard (Barry 56), Bent (Welbeck 63).
Spain: Casillas (Reina 46) - Arbeloa, Pique, Sergio Ramos (Puyol 74), Jordi Alba, Busquets (Fernando Torres 64), Xabi Alonso, Xavi (Fabregas 46), Iniesta (Cazorla 74), Silva (Mata 46), Villa.

Nov 12 - Benin City
Nigeria 0
Botswana 0

Nov 12 - Port Elizabeth
South Africa 1 (Mphela 53)
Ivory Coast 1 (Gaxa og 36)
HT: 0-1
South Africa: Josephs - Ngcongca, Gould, Sangweni, Masilela (Gaxa 26), Dikgacoi, Letsholonyane (Khuboni 89), Pienaar (Maluleka 90+5), Claasen (Manyisa 60), Tshabalala (Lebese 90+6), Mphela (Nontshinga 89).
Ivory Coast: Barry - Lolo, Bamba, K Toure, Tiene, Zokora, Y Toure (Ya Konan 84), Gosso (Eboue 88), Gradel (Kalou 77), Gervinho, Doumbia (Bony 66).

Nov 12 - Cardiff
Wales 4 (Bale 11, Bellamy 16, Vokes 88, 89)
Norway 1 (Huseklepp 61)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 12,637. **Ref:** Grobelnik (Aut)
Wales: Hennessey - Gunter, Matthews, Williams, Blake, Allen (Robson-Kanu 76), Crofts, Ramsey (King 90), Bale, Bellamy (Edwards 90), Morison (Vokes 70).
Norway: Jarstein (Pettersen 46) - Ruud, Waehler (Demidov 46), Hangeland, J A Riise, Gamst Pedersen, Tettey, Grindheim (Brenne 54), Jenssen (Parr 85), Abdellaoue (Braaten 77), Huseklepp.

Sunday, November 13

Nov 13 - Guwahati
India 1 (Nabi 87)
Malaysia 1 (Rahim 44)
HT: 0-1

Monday, November 14

Nov 14 - Doha, Qatar
Egypt 0
Brazil 2 (Jonas 39, 59)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Al Dosari (Qat)
Egypt: El Shenawy - Fathi, Hegazy, Gomaa (Said 85), Nasef, Ghaly (Salah 46), Abd Rabo (Hassan 73), Al Muhammady, Shikabala (El Said 77), Zidan (Soliman 46), Moteab (El Gabbas 64).
Brazil: Diego Alves - Daniel Alves, David Luiz, Thiago Silva, Alex Sandro, Lucas Leiva, Fernandinho (Elias 76), Hernanes, Bruno Cesar (Willian 73), Hulk (Dudu 83), Jonas (Kleber 80).

Nov 14 - San Pedro Sula
Honduras 2 (Bengtson 5, 29)
Serbia 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Quesada (CR)
Honduras: N Valladares - O Chavez, Sabillon (Guerrero 62), Leveron, Figueroa, Delgado (Mejia 87), Espinoza, Alvarez (Berrios 87), De Leon (Garcia 62), Welcome (M Martinez 82), Bengtson (Vega 73).
Serbia: Kahriman - Tomovic (Ninkov 46), Volkov, Rajkovic (Vilotic 68), Ivanovic, Kacar (Jovanovic 46), Kuzmanovic (Petrovic 76), Ninkovic, Tomic (Krasic 46), Jankovic, Zigic (Kaludjerovic 57).

Tuesday, November 15

Nov 15 - San Jose
Costa Rica 2 (Brenes 31, Campbell 41)
Spain 2 (Silva 82, Villa 90+1)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Navarro (Can)
Costa Rica: Navas - Umana, Acosta, Miller, Salvatierra, Barrantes (Diaz 73), Brenes (Lopez 57), Azofeifa (Cubero 85), Oviedo (Hernandez 79), Campbell (W Parks 65), Ruiz (Guevara 88).
Spain: Casillas (Valdes 46) - Arbeloa, Puyol, Sergio Ramos, Monreal (Fernando Torres 69), Xavi (Cazorla 46), Xabi Alonso (Busquets 46), Iniesta, Mata (Jesus Navas 46), Fabregas (Silva 63), Villa.

Nov 15 - Esbjerg
Denmark 2 (Agger 57, Bendtner 59)
Finland 1 (A Eremenko 18)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 14,137. **Ref:** Jakobsson (Ice)
Denmark: Lindegaard - Jacobsen, Okore, Agger, Silberbauer, Kvist (C Poulsen 46), M Jorgensen (J Poulsen 55), Wass (Mikkelsen 46), Schone (Eriksen 70), Krohn-Dehli (N Jorgensen 58), Bendtner (Beckmann 87).
Finland: Fredrikson (Hradecky 34) - Halsti, Pasanen (Ojala 77), Moisander (Jalasto 90+1), Lampi, Ring (Hetemaj 68), R Eremenko, Sparv, Hamalainen (Forssell 90), A Eremenko (Sjolund 25), Pukki.

Nov 15 - London
England 1 (Majstorovic og 22)
Sweden 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 48,676. **Ref:** Kralovec (Cze)
England: Hart (Carson 46) - Walker, Cahill, Terry, Baines, Rodwell (Milner 58), Jones, Barry, Walcott (Sturridge 58), Zamora (Bent 70), Downing.
Sweden: Isaksson - Lustig (Wilhelmsson 55), Mellberg (J Olsson 46), Majstorovic, M Olsson, Wernbloom, Kallstrom (A Svensson 70), R Elm (Bajrami 87), Elmander, S Larsson, Ibrahimovic (Toivonen 46).

Nov 15 - Paris
France 0
Belgium 0
Att: 52,825. **Ref:** Muniz Fernandez (Spa)
France: Lloris - Reveillere, Rami, Sakho, Abidal, Cabaye, M'Vila (Gonalons 42), Martin, Remy (Giroud 72), Benzema (Menez 72), Ribery (Malouda 72).
Belgium: Courtois - Alderweireld, Van Buyten, Kompany, Vermaelen, Fellaini, Simons, Witsel, Dembele (Chadli 62), Vossen (Mirallas 70), Hazard.

Nov 15 - Hamburg
Germany 3 (Muller 15, Klose 25, Ozil 66)
Holland 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 51,500. **Ref:** Cakir (Tur)
Germany: Neuer - Boateng (Howedes 65), Mertesacker, Badstuber (Hummels 46), Aogo, Kroos (Rolfes 82), Khedira (L Bender 88), Muller, Ozil, Podolski (Gotze 65), Klose (Reus 81).
Holland: Stekelenburg - Van der Wiel, Heitinga, Mathijsen, Braalheid, Van Bommel, Strootman (N De Jong 64), Kuyt (Wijnaldum 87), Sneijder (L De Jong 87), Babel, Huntelaar (Beerens 76).

Nov 15 - Saint-Leu-La-Foret, France
Ghana 2 (Agyemang-Badu pen 10, D Asamoah 90+2)
Gabon 1 (Mouloungui 45)
HT: 1-1

Nov 15 - Altach, Austria
Greece 1 (Karagounis 34)
Romania 3 (Torje 17, Tanase 61, Chipciu 81)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 700. **Ref:** Gangl (Aut)
Greece: Kapino - Maniatis, Papastathopoulos (A Papadopoulos 46), Malezas, Giannoulis, Makos (Fotakis 46), Karagounis, Tziolis (Salpingidis 77), Kone (Theodoridis 65), Limberopoulos (Mitroglou 46), Charisteas (Samaras 46).
Romania: Balgradean - Papp, Gaman (Chiriches 63), Goian, Radu, Torje, Neagu (Grigore 86), Pintilii (Lazar 46), Tanase (Chipciu 67), Mazilu (M Niculae 46), Stancu (Cocis 78).

Nov 15 - Mantes-La-Jolie, France
Guinea 1 (Conte 90)
Burkina Faso 1 (Dagano 10)
HT: 0-1

Nov 15 - Rome
Italy 0
Uruguay 1 (S Fernandez 3)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 42,000. **Ref:** Gomes (Por)
Italy: Buffon - Maggio, Ranocchia, Chiellini, Balzaretti, De Rossi, Pirlo, Marchisio (Pazzini 81), Montolivo (Pepe 46), Osvaldo (Matri 65), Balotelli.
Uruguay: Muslera - Caceres, Lugano (Coates 46), Godin, A Pereira, M Pereira (Scotti 90+3), Perez (Eguren 50), Arevalo, C Rodriguez (Gonzalez 81), S Fernandez (Alfaro 81), Cavani.
Sent off: A Pereira 80min.

Nov 15 - Dubai, UAE
Libya 1 (Saad 32)
Belarus 1 (Kornilenko 77)
HT: 1-0
Sent off: Al Sanaani (Libya) 69min
Belarus: Veremko - Martynovich, Verkhovtsov, Kulchy, Kislyak (V Hleb 46), Putsilo (Bychanok 87), Kalachev, Trubila, Omelyanchuk, Dragun (Shitov 63), Kornilenko. *Sent off: Shitov 69min, Kornilenko 90min.*

Nov 15 - Luxembourg
Luxembourg 0
Switzerland 1 (Xhaka 9)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 852. **Ref:** Delferiere (Blg)
Luxembourg: Joubert - Schnell, Blaise, Hoffmann, Janisch (Collette 87), Gerson (Laterza 39), Payal, Peters (Pedro 85), Bettmer (Da Mota 67), Mutsch, Joachim (Deville 88).
Switzerland: Benaglio - Lichtsteiner (Rufli 71), Von Bergen (Nef 89), Klose, Rodriguez, D Degen (Shaqiri 64), Inler (F Frei 46), Fernandes, Mehmedi (Costanzo 62), Xhaka (Dzemaili 64), Derdiyok.

Nov 15 - Prilep
Macedonia 0
Albania 0
Att: 4,500. **Ref:** Vincic (Sln)
Macedonia: Pacovski (Nuredinoski 46) - Sikov, Dimitrovski (Lazevski 78), Mojsov, Hasani (Gligorov 69), Sumulikoski, Gjurovski (Georgievski 46), Naumoski (Fetai 61), Todorovski (Ibraimi 46), Demiri, Ivanovski.
Albania: Hidi - Lila, Daliku, Cana, Agolli, Hyka (Lilaj 85), Vila (Veliu 90+1), Teli, Salihi (Kapllani 56), Bakaj (Januzi 36; Lika 85), Roshi (Muzaka 56).

Nov 15 - Niamey
Niger 1
Botswana 1
HT: 1-1

Nov 15 - Kaduna
Nigeria 2 (K Uche 9, I Uche 90)
Zambia 0
HT: 1-0
Nigeria: Enyeama (Ejide 46) - Ambrose, Yobo, Taiwo, Adeleye (Ukah 57), Etuhu (Okonkwo 55), Ogude (I Uche 27), Obi, K Uche (Nosa 82), Musa, Emenike (Aneke 74).
Zambia: Mweene - Kasonde (Nkausu 46), S Sunzu, N Mulenga (Singuluma 90), Musonda, C Katongo, Njobvu (Chivuta 83), F Katongo (C Mulenga 46), Mbesuma (Chamanga 46), Mayuka (Chansa 46), Kalaba.

Nov 15 - Poznan
Poland 2 (Pawel Brozek 37, Vanczak og 86)
Hungary 1 (Priskin 78)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 8,000. **Ref:** Kaasik (Est)
Poland: Fabianski - Wojtkowiak (Gol 83), Wasilewski, Glowacki (Piszczek 58), Komorowski, Dudka (Jodlowiec 65), Matuszczyk (Murawski 46), Blaszczykowski, A Mierzejewski (Obraniak 73), Rybus, Pawel Brozek (R Lewandowski 66).
Hungary: Bogdan - Varga, Juhasz, Laczko, Koman, Vanczak, Tozser (Elek 46), Dzsudzsak, Sandor (Hajnal 46), Gera, Priskin (Feczesin 81).

Nov 15 - Ljubljana
Slovenia 2 (Matavz 26, 61)
United States 3 (Buddle 9, Dempsey 41, Altidore pen 43)
HT: 1-3. **Att:** 8,140. **Ref:** Schorgenhofer (Aut)
Slovenia: S Handanovic - Brecko, Suler, Cesar, Jokic, Matic (Krhin 46), Bacinovic (Lazarevic 88), Ljubijankic (Pecnik 80), Ilicic (Birsa 46), Kirm (Vrsic 70), Matavz (Dedic 79).
United States: Howard - Cherundolo, Goodson, Bocanegra, Chandler (Williams 82), Beckerman (Jones 90), Bradley (Rogers 90+4), F Johnson (Shea 61), Dempsey, Altidore, Buddle (Edu 78).

Nov 15 - Lviv
Ukraine 2 (Milevskyi 18, Devic 90+2)
Austria 1 (Kucher og 71)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 31,879. **Ref:** Moen (Nor)
Ukraine: Dykan - Fedetskyi (Butko 46), Kucher, Rakitskyi, Selin, Tymoshchuk, Rotan (Harmash 46), Aliyev (Devic 74), Yarmolenko (Husiev 64), Konoplyanka (Nazarenko 86), Milevskyi (Shevchenko 56). *Sent off: Kucher 81min.*
Austria: Almer - Schiemer, Prodl, Pogatetz, Fuchs, Harnik (Kavlak 60), Baumgartlinger, Alaba, Ivanschitz, Arnautovic, Janko.

Nov 15 - Harare
Zimbabwe 2 (Musona 53, 61)
South Africa 1 (Grobler 29)
HT: 0-1
Zimbabwe: Kapini - Khumbuyani, Zvasiya, Sweswe, Jambo, Katsande, Nengomasha (Zhuwawo 68), Karuru (Gutu 75), Billiat (Mukamba 71), Malajila, Musona (Mapemba 86).
South Africa: Josephs - Jele, Fransman, Gould, Masenamela, Manyisa (Claasen 66), Khuboni, Kekana (Maluleka 89), Modise, Erasmus (Nontshinga 69), Grobler (Lebese 86).

Wednesday, November 16

Nov 16 - Calcutta
India 3 (Chhetri 39, 53, Lalpekhlua 47)
Malaysia 2 (Mohd Sall 45, 60)
HT: 1-1

Tuesday, November 22

Nov 22 - Male
Maldives 3 (Thoriq 13, 45+1, Ashfaq 78)
Seychelles 0
HT: 2-0

Thursday, November 24

Nov 24 - Male
Maldives 2 (Fazeel 85, pen 90+2)
Seychelles 1 (Coralie 49)
HT: 0-0
Sent off: Ashfaq (Maldives) 70min

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EUROPE

How the continent's national teams fared in 2011

No way through...Bosnia's Dzeko (left) is stopped in his tracks by Pepe of Portugal in the first leg of their Euro 2012 play-off

ALBANIA

Jumped to 50th in April's FIFA rankings after beating Belarus in the Euro qualifiers – their highest-ever position – before slipping back down and ending the year in 75th place. Croatian coach Josip Kuze, who suffered a stroke in October 2010, stepped down at the end of the qualifying campaign and a replacement is yet to be announced.

ANDORRA

Suffered further disappointment after finishing the Euro 2012 campaign pointless, having stretched their sequence of consecutive defeats to 34. Scored one goal all year – against Moldova in a friendly in Portugal.

ARMENIA

Arguably, Europe's most improved team in the past 12 months. Under Vardan Minasyan they finished third in their qualifying group, behind Republic of Ireland, who beat them in the final group match in Dublin. Midfielder Henrikh Mkhitaryan emerged as a key player among a new generation of youngsters brought up to play attacking football.

AUSTRIA

Poor performances in the Euro 2012 qualifiers prompted coach Dietmar Constantini to resign. Many Austrians were not happy at his Swiss replacement, Marcell Koller, who was last in charge of Bochum in 2009.

AZERBAIJAN

Enjoyed their best points haul from a qualifying campaign (seven). Coach Berti Vogts, in his second qualifying cycle, had been expected to quit but changed tack and agreed a new contract.

BELARUS

After a bright start to the Euro 2012 qualifiers, following the opening victory over France in Paris in September 2010, Bernd Stange's side tailed off and he stepped down in October. His replacement is Georgi Kondratyev, who led the country's youngsters to the semi-finals of the Euro Under-21s in June, a performance which earned them a place in 2012's Olympic tournament.

BELGIUM

Despite high hopes that a bright young generation would do well in Euro qualifying, they came unstuck against Germany and Turkey. Georges Leekens, in his second spell in charge, faced criticism for some of his selections but agreed a deal to stay on for the 2014 World Cup campaign.

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

A dramatic Euro qualifying campaign ended in glorious failure, beaten over two legs by Portugal after finishing behind France in their group. A penalty from Samir Nasri in Paris cancelled out Edin Dzeko's first-half goal and pushed Bosnia into runners-up sport.

BULGARIA

A disastrous qualifying campaign, featuring three different coaches – including Lothar Matthaus, who was sacked in September – and the premature retirement of Dimitar Berbatov. Luboslav Penev was appointed coach for the 2014 World Cup qualifiers. Captain Stilian Petrov became Bulgaria's most-capped player, breaking Boris Mihaylov's record of 102.

Record...Petrov set new national mark

CROATIA

Slaven Bilic oversaw a successful qualification for the Euro 2012 finals following a comfortable play-off win over Turkey. Although he resisted offers from foreign clubs and countries, Bilic has made it clear he will leave after the summer tournament. Established players Luka Modric, Vedran Corluka, Ivica Olic played key roles, alongside emerging talent Ivan Perisic and Dejan Lovren.

CYPRUS

A dire Euro qualifying campaign, finishing bottom of their group with only two points. Coach Angelos Anastasiadis was sacked in March following a 0-0 draw with Iceland after seven years in charge and he was replaced by ex-Panathinaikos coach Nikos Nioplias. A poor year ended with a 2-1 home defeat by Scotland in a friendly.

CZECH REPUBLIC

Euro 2012 play-off winners against Montenegro after playing second fiddle to Spain in their qualifying group. Rebuilding under coach Michal Bilek, with under-21 stars breaking through, but old dogs Tomas Rosicky and Petr Cech are still important.

DENMARK

Another solid year, with qualification for the Euros achieved from a tough group ahead of Portugal and Norway. Morten Olsen, the longest-serving coach of any major nation, reversed his original decision to quit after the Euros and agreed to stay on for the World Cup qualifiers.

ENGLAND

The world's best paid national coach Fabio "£6million a year" Capello oversaw comfortable qualification for Euro 2012 but his side remain hugely dependent on Wayne Rooney. Friendly wins over Spain and Sweden took them to fifth in the world rankings. On the plus side, youngsters Jack Wilshere, Phil Jones, Jack Rodwell and Kyle Walker were all blooded.

ESTONIA

A fantastic late run, featuring wins over Northern Ireland and Slovenia, took them into the Euro play-offs for the first time. But a comprehensive loss to Ireland in Tallinn, which included two red cards, was followed by a 1-1 draw in Dublin.

FAROE ISLANDS

Progress was made under Irishman Brian Kerr, with Estonia beaten and Northern Ireland held in the Euro qualifiers. Despite the progress of youngsters in England – Joan Simun Edmundsson at Newcastle United and Gunnar Nielsen at Tranmere Rovers – Kerr declined an offer to extend his contract.

FINLAND

Mixu Paatelainen took over as coach midway through a disappointing qualifying campaign that saw a promising 4-1 win over Moldova sandwiched by heavy defeats by Sweden and Holland. Paatelainen's priority now will be to introduce new talent to replace the retiring Jussi Jaaskelainen, Sami Hyypia and Jari Litmanen.

Fresh start...Paatelainen needs new blood

FRANCE

Coach Laurent Blanc put *Les Bleus* back on track after a disastrous 2010 World Cup and even survived the scandal of a taped meeting at which French federation officials appeared to make racist comments. World Cup rebels Patrice Evra and Franck Ribery were restored to the squad and joined by new faces Adil Rami and Yann M'Vila, while Karim Benzema finally found form.

GEORGIA

Under coach Temuri Ketsbaia they failed to build on early promise of a victory over Croatia in Tbilisi, only managing draws with closest rivals Malta and Latvia.

GERMANY

Installed as favourites for Euro 2012 after finishing their qualifying campaign with 10 straight wins, the squad that so impressed at the 2010 World Cup has been augmented by Borussia Dortmund youngsters Mario Gotze and Mats Hummels. Mario Gomez of Bayern Munich emerged as a key striker.

GREECE

Qualified automatically – and unbeaten – for Euro 2012 under Fernando Santos, who adopted a more attacking bent, albeit with mostly the same players as Otto Rehhagel. Many of the heroes of 2004 are still around, but there is also new blood in the form of Sotiris Ninis, while goalkeeper Alexandros Tzorvas impressed.

HOLLAND

An outstanding Euro 2012 qualifying campaign was sullied only by defeat to Sweden in the final game. The 2010 World Cup squad stayed largely intact, augmented by some new faces such as Twente striker Luuk De Jong, while coach Bert Van Marwijk has agreed a new contract which takes him through to 2016.

HUNGARY

It was a familiar story in the Euro qualifying campaign, where former

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Flying start...having opened the scoring in the first leg of their play-off, at home in Prague, Czech Republic winger Vaclav Pilar (right) battles Montenegro's Elsad Zverotic in the return

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Still going strong...Robbie Keane celebrates qualification for next summer's finals

under-20 coach Sandor Egervari took charge but victories over Sweden and Moldova in September came too late to make an impression on the group.

ICELAND

The under-21 side competed at a European championship for the first time and several players made the step up to senior level. Olafur Johannesson stepped down as coach at the end of the Euro 2012 qualifying campaign and was replaced by former Sweden coach Lars Lagerback.

ISRAEL

French coach Luis Fernandez stepped down after a Euro 2012 qualifying campaign that featured mixed results. Although they beat Latvia, Georgia and Malta, they also lost all four games to Greece and Croatia. Injured star Yossi Benayoun was sorely missed.

ITALY

The *Azzurri* qualified for Euro 2012 without drama, with Cesare Prandelli's line-up changes paying dividends after the disappointment of the 2010 World Cup. Giovanni Rossi, Giampaolo Pazzini, Mario Balotelli and others offered plenty of options in attack.

KAZAKHSTAN

Former Czech under-21 coach Miroslav Beranek was hired after a poor start to qualifiers cost Germany's Bernd Storck his job, but there was little improvement in results, apart from a 0-0 draw with Austria in their final qualifier.

LATVIA

Alexander Starkovs combined his national coach duties with a job at Azerbaijan club Baku. There was little to celebrate in the Euro qualifying campaign, save for a 1-0 win over Georgia in Tbilisi in September, but that was followed four days later by a 5-1 defeat by Greece in Riga.

LIECHTENSTEIN

The Euro qualifying campaign proved relatively successful, with a 2-0 home win over Lithuania.

LITHUANIA

Coach Raimondas Zutautas stepped down after a poor Euro qualifying campaign, which included a loss to Liechtenstein. The national side slipped to 75th in the FIFA world rankings.

LUXEMBOURG

A new coach arrived in Luc Holtz, but it was the same old story in the Euro qualifiers, finishing bottom of their group, although they did manage a 2-1 win over Albania in September.

MACEDONIA

John Toshack was the surprise choice as new national coach in August after Mirsad Jonuz was sacked following three consecutive defeats in the Euro qualifiers. Forward Ivan Trickovski enjoyed success with APOEL Nicosia but could not transfer that to international stage. A 1-0 win over Andorra was followed by a 4-1 defeat by Armenia, but draws with Slovakia (October) and Albania (November) hinted at improvements in 2012.

MALTA

Another disappointing Euro qualifying campaign, bottom of their group with just one point from a home draw with Georgia, saw coach John Buttigieg sacked.

MOLDOVA

Romanian coach Gavril Balint oversaw an ultimately frustrating qualifying campaign in which the promise of an early victory over Finland was not built upon.

MONTENEGRO

Reaching the Euro 2012 play-offs, where they beaten by the Czech Republic, exceeded all expectations for UEFA's newest member. Zlatko Kranjcar was sacked in September, apparently because of alcoholism, but the achievement of his players, led by Juventus striker Mirko Vucinic, should not be ignored.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Nigel Worthington quit as manager after a frustrating Euro 2012 qualifying campaign. The problem of players born in the north switching allegiances to the south became a contentious issue, with allegations that a number of under-21 players had been "tapped up" by the Republic to follow in the footsteps of senior players such as Manchester United's Darron Gibson and Stoke City's Marc Wilson.

NORWAY

Egil Olsen was back in charge of the national side but he could not manufacture another miracle from a tough qualifying group containing Denmark and Portugal.

POLAND

As Euro 2012 co-hosts, Poland were forced to rely on friendlies to prepare for next year's finals and they managed a 2-2 draw with Germany in September after leading 2-1 until the 90th minute. Arsenal keeper Wojciech Szczesny, is emerging as a leader, along with Borussia Dortmund striker Robert Lewandowski. Coach Franciszek Smuda gave debuts to a number of foreign-based players with Polish roots such as Ludovic Obraniak (Lille), Sebastian Boenisch (Werder Bremen), Adam Matuszczyk (Cologne), Eugen Polanski (Mainz) and Damien Perquis (Sochaux).

PORTUGAL

Under new coach Paulo Bento, the national side lost their crucial final group game to Denmark but qualified for Euro 2012 via the play-offs. Cristiano Ronaldo struggled to repeat his superb goalscoring touch at club level on the international stage, but Nani was more impressive, scoring a wonder goal in the play-off against Bosnia. Bento vowed not to select Ricardo Carvalho or Jose Bosingwa after rows.

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Giovanni Trapattoni was rewarded with a new two-year contract after qualifying for Euro 2012. The Italian coach built his side around a mean defence and the goals of Robbie Keane. The 31-year-old's his strike against Scotland in May meant that he had scored for his country for 14 years running, which was a new world record.

ROMANIA

Victor Piturca, sacked in April 2009, was re-appointed national coach in June 2011 following Razvan Lucescu's decision to step down to take up a job back at Rapid Bucharest. The national post was then offered to Gheorghe Hagi who turned it down, so Piturca returned for his third spell. Things had been looking up, with a win over Bosnia in Lucescu's last game, but a series of draws in the autumn, against France, Belarus and Albania, killed off any hopes of qualification for Euro 2012.

Draws...Romania's Cristian Tanase (left)

RUSSIA

Comfortable qualification under Dick Advocaat, despite a lack of goals.

SAN MARINO

Another miserable qualifying campaign, 10 defeats, 53 goals conceded, no goals scored.

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SCOTLAND

Manager Craig Levein benefited from key players being employed in England - Charlie Adam playing at Liverpool, for example – but a frustrating 2-2 draw with the Czech Republic, which featured a number of dubious penalty decisions, cost Scotland dearly in the Euro 2012 qualifiers.

SERBIA

The Euro 2012 qualifying campaign ended disastrously, with defeat to Slovenia in their final group game, in which a penalty was missed by Nemanja Vidic – who subsequently announced his international retirement. The 1-0 loss allowed Estonia to sneak second place in the group and coach Vladimir Petrovic was sacked. In truth, Serbia never fully recovered from losing an early game to Estonia and were destabilised by a crowd ban following trouble in the away game against Italy.

SLOVAKIA

The Euro 2012 qualifying campaign was a huge disappointment for the 2010 World Cup finalists, who failed to win any of their final four group games, which included a 4-0 thrashing at home by Armenia.

International retirement...Vidic (right)

SLOVENIA

Matjaz Kek's side missed out on a Euro 2012 play-off place after suffering home and away defeats to Estonia in September. Their 1-0 win over Serbia, thanks to Dare Vrsic's long-range free-kick, ended any hopes of making the play-offs, and sent Estonia through instead.

SPAIN

The world and European champions lived a double life, unbeatable in the Euro qualifying campaign, but unable to win friendlies. They lost to Portugal, Argentina and England, but maintained a 100 per cent record in the Euro qualifiers, winning all eight games. David Villa became Spain's all-time top scorer in March with goals against the Czech Republic, his 45th and 46th at international level. Iker Casillas became the country's most capped player when he won his 127th cap against Costa Rica in November.

SWEDEN

Victory over Holland in their final Euro 2012 qualifying game put the Swedes into the finals as the best runners-up. Zlatan Ibrahimovic returned to the national side but debate raged over whether the team was better off without him. Anders Svensson became Sweden's most-capped outfield player, surpassing Roland Nilsson's mark of 116 caps, while Rasmus Elm represented the brightest of the new talent breaking through.

SWITZERLAND

A poor start to the Euro qualifiers prompted Alex Frei to announce his international retirement, but they have promising youngsters in Xherdan Shaqiri and Granit Xhaka.

TURKEY

Dutchman Guus Hiddink failed to repeat the success of spells in charge of South Korea, Australia and Russia. After finishing behind Germany in their Euro qualifying group, the national side were outplayed by Croatia in the play-off. Hiddink resisted interest in him returning to Chelsea but departed after the play-off defeat.

UKRAINE

Oleg Blokhin, coach at the 2006 World Cup, was re-appointed as national coach in April but has struggled to find the right blend as the co-hosts prepare for Euro 2012. A 4-1 defeat by France in Donetsk exemplified the scale of the task facing Blokhin, who has tried out more than 40 players, including four different keepers.

WALES

The tragic suicide of manager Gary Speed stunned Welsh football just as the national team had reason to be optimistic about the future. Results had improved during Speed's short period in charge, with plenty of new faces introduced and the appointment of Arsenal's young midfielder Aaron Ramsey as captain.

Outnumbered...grounded Croatia captain Darijo Srna still manages to get the better of Turkey trio (left to right) Arda Turan, Emre Belozoglu and Selcuk Inan

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE
Misery as Manchester clubs crash out

Heading out...David Abraham (left) and Cabral withstand the pressure from Vidic as Basle end Manchester United's hopes of progressing to the knockout stage of the competition

The two Manchester clubs, United and City, were the biggest casualties of the Champions League group stage. United lost their final match to Basle and finished behind the Swiss champions and Benfica in Group C, while City finished third behind Bayern Munich and Napoli despite beating the German side in their final Group A match.

United had been expected to progress from a relatively easy group, but failure to beat Benfica and Basle in any of their four encounters proved costly.

They only needed a point in their final game, against Basle in Switzerland, but the hosts took an early lead through Marco Streller and never seemed likely to relinquish their lead. United then lost Nemanja Vidic to a knee injury just before half-time and struggled to find any cutting edge. Basle extended their lead with five minutes remaining through Alexander Frei. There was still time for Phil Jones to scramble a late reply after substitute Federico Macheda had hit the crossbar, but it was too late.

Basle became the first Swiss club to qualify for the knockout stage under the current format of the Champions League, while United will now compete in the Europa League, formerly the UEFA Cup, for the first time since 1995, when they lost to Rotor Volgograd in the first round on away goals.

Benfica had already confirmed their progress to the knockout stage with a 2-2 draw at Old Trafford on Matchday 5. They went through as group winners after a 1-0 home win over Romania's Otelul, who finished the group stage without a point.

Meaningless victory

Manchester City won their final Group A match, 2-0 at home to an understrength Bayern Munich side who had already qualified for the next stage, but Napoli's 2-0 victory at bottom side Villarreal rendered that victory meaningless.

The crucial result of the group had occurred two weeks previously when Napoli beat City 2-1 in Naples with a brace from Edinson Cavani. Mario Balotelli had equalised for City, but Napoli's quality proved too much.

In Group B, Internazionale put their early woes behind them and could afford to lose their final group game to CSKA Moscow and still finish as group winners. CSKA's 2-1 win in Milan came courtesy of a late winner from defender Vasili Berezutski. Inter's Argentinian midfielder Esteban Cambiasso had scored within 60 seconds of Seydou Doumbia's second-half

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Clincher...two goals from Napoli's Cavani (no7) saw off Manchester City in Italy

opener to cancel out CSKA's lead but Berezutski struck from a corner to send CSKA through as group runners-up. Trabzonspor, despite topping the group early on after winning their opening game in Milan, drew their final match 0-0 with Lille to finish above the French champions and go into the Europa League.

Group D winners Real Madrid were the only side to finish the group stage with a 100 per cent record after they recorded a sixth straight win when they beat Ajax 3-0 in Amsterdam.

However, the true drama was elsewhere in the group. All square on head-to-head games, Lyon went into their final game with little realistic hope of finishing above Ajax in second place as the Dutch side had a seven-goal superior goal difference. But after going a goal down to Dinamo Zagreb in Croatia, Lyon launched an astonishing second-half comeback to win 7-1, with Bafetimbi Gomis scoring four.

That result, coupled with Ajax's 3-0 defeat to Madrid, sent the French side through, condemned Ajax to the Europa League and had some observers calling for an official investigation.

In Group E, Chelsea were under pressure going into their final game against Valencia after failing to beat Genk in Belgium and then losing to Bayer Leverkusen in Germany. They needed at least a score draw against Valencia at Stamford Bridge to be sure of finishing above the Spanish side. In the end, Didier Drogba put in a powerful performance, scoring an early goal for Chelsea, setting up Ramires for the second and then adding another himself after the break to ensure a 3-0 victory that kept Chelsea top of the group.

In Group F, Arsenal sealed qualification for the knockout stage with a game to spare following a 2-1 victory over Borussia Dortmund thanks to two goals from in-form Holland striker Robin Van Persie.

Arsenal then rested most of their first-choice XI for the final group game, away at Olympiakos, who recorded a 3-1 victory.

That win looked like being enough to send the Greek champions through to the knockout stage because Marseille were 2-1 down at half-time in their final game away to Dortmund. However, a remarkable turnaround in Germany saw Andre Ayew and Mathieu Valbuena score dramatic late goals to secure a stunning victory for the French champions and drop Olympiakos down into the Europa League.

In Group F, APOEL Nicosia continued their fairy-tale campaign with a 0-0 draw at Zenit St Petersburg which confirmed their place in the last 16 after Matchday 5. They could afford to lose their final match at home to Shahktar Donetsk and still finish as group winners because Porto and Zenit could only manage a goalless draw in Porto. That 0-0 result meant Porto slipped back into the Europa League, a competition they won last season.

Group H finished as expected, with defending champions Barcelona clear of the field, and Milan a distinct second best, though much better than BATE Borisov and Viktoria Plzen.

Barcelona coach Pep Guardiola, whose side won the group with a 3-2 win in Milan in their penultimate game, picked a completely changed team for the final match, against BATE. He rested 14 first-team regulars to field a side with an average age among the outfield players of 21.4.

Youngsters Sergi Roberto and Martin Montoya were on target, along with Pedro who scored twice in a comfortable 4-0 win.

John Holmesdale

Shock result...Lyon celebrate the astonishing turn of events that sent them through

STARS OF THE GROUP STAGES

EDINSON CAVANI (Napoli)
The shining light of a side making their debut in the group stages.

AILTON (APOEL Nicosia)
The Brazilian's goals steered the Cypriot club to a surprise qualification for the group stages and an even more unlikely place in the last 16.

Hero...APOEL striker Ailton (right)

NICOLAS GAITAN (Benfica)
The Argentinian was the creative inspiration for the Lisbon side as they topped Group C.

ROBIN VAN PERSIE (Arsenal)
The Dutch striker carried his team into the knockout stages almost single-handedly.

MARIO GOMEZ
(Bayern Munich)
Joint top scorer with six goals for Group A winners Bayern.

Six...Joint-top goalscorer Gomez

SEYDOU DOUMBIA
(CSKA Moscow)
Five goals in six games put the Russians in the next round.

LIONEL MESSI (Barcelona)
Six goals in five group games for the world's best player.

ALEXANDER FREI (Basle)
The 32-year old notched five goals, including two against Manchester United.

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NORWAY

Molde mark centenary with first title

The Norwegian domestic season had never ended as late as November 27 before – and it came as a relief for many when it was finally over, after the national side's failure to reach the Euro finals, the deep financial problems affecting many clubs and bitter in-fighting between the Football Association of Norway (NFF) president, Yngve Hallen, and members of his board.

It was, however, an immensely successful first campaign for coaching newcomer Ole Gunnar Solskjaer. The 38-year-old former Manchester United striker won admirers up and down the country as he led Molde to the Premier League title for the first time in their 100-year history.

Espen Bugge Pettersen, who won the NFF's goalkeeper of the year award, was in fine form for the champions – along with Magnus Wolff Eikrem, Vegard Forren and Magne Hoseth – as Molde finished five points clear of the field to take their place in next season's UEFA Champions League second qualifying round.

Meanwhile, seven clubs were in the mix for the two Europa League places going into their final game.

Tromso thrashed already-relegated Start 6-1, with a hat-trick from on-loan Mos Abdellaoue, to grab the runners-up spot. Tromso have become a remarkably stable unit under coach Per Mathias Hogmo, but they may struggle next season without Abdellaoue – who returned to Valerenga after finishing the campaign as the league's top scorer with 17 goals – and veteran striker Sigurd Rushfeldt, who at 38 has called time on a career that saw him score 172 times in 299 matches.

Winner...Molde defender Kristoffer Paulsen Vatshaug (right) repels a Rosenborg attack

Defending champions Rosenborg took third place by beating Viking 3-2 at home in their final match. Striker Mushaga Bakenga, who scored twice, looks to be a star in the making for Janne Jonsson's side, who will be without full-back Mikael Lustig next season after he agreed to join Celtic in Scotland.

Also playing in Europe will be Aalesund, who finished ninth but won the Norwegian Cup, coach Kjetil Rekdal's side beating Brann 2-1 in the Final with both goals coming from midfielder Michael Barrantes.

Having lost several key players, Brann were expected to struggle. However, with Jamaican midfielder Rodolph Austin and 15-goal Nigerian striker Kim Ojo leading the way, they added an impressive fourth place to their cup run.

A 7-0 hammering by Rosenborg in late August saw Odd Grenland fighting a relegation battle until coach Dag-Eilev Fagermo turned things around with a nine-match unbeaten run, and only a 3-2 loss to relegated Sarpsborg on the final day denied them third place. Although 38-year-old Tommy Svindal Larsen has decided to hang up his boots, 37-year-old striker Frode Johnsen will turn out for Odd Grenland for another season.

At 35, Freddy Dos Santos has also retired, crowning his 337th and final appearance for Valerenga with their second goal in a 2-0 victory over Stabaek.

Financially, Stabaek had a disastrous season as they were kicked out of their Telenor Arena home. They will return to their old Nadderud stadium next term but, with important players leaving, they are a club in turmoil.

A disappointing campaign saw Henning Berg forced out at Lillestrom, with Swedish coach Magnus Haglund taking over. Another Swede, Jonas Olsson, was put in charge of Sogndal.

Honefoss and Sandnes Ulf will replace Start and Sarpsborg next season.

Sigurd Odegaard

For final league table, see page 109

Europe here we come...Aalesund celebrate beating Brann in the Norwegian Cup Final

PLAYER OF THE YEAR
RODOLPH AUSTIN
(Brann)
Jamaica international who was a non-stop dynamo for his club.

NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR
MAGNUS WOLFF EIKREM
(Molde)
Promising 21-year-old midfielder who returned to his homeland from Manchester United before the start of the season.

COACH OF THE YEAR
OLE GUNNAR SOLSKJAER
(Molde)
Led his former club to their first league championship in his debut season in management.

Back home...Eikrem

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BRAZIL

Tite rewards Corinthians with title

Success...Corinthians salute their supporters after clinching the league championship in an explosive, goalless Sao Paulo derby with Palmeiras in which four players were sent off

At the start of 2011, when Corinthians fell in the qualifying round of the Libertadores Cup to Tolima of Colombia, there was pressure on club president Andres Sanchez to dismiss coach Tite. Instead, he kept the faith and was rewarded with a fifth title.

Needing a point to finish ahead of Vasco da Gama, Corinthians drew 0-0 with local rivals Palmeiras to seal a triumph that said much about the identity of the club and the balance of forces in the competition.

Formed by a group of Sao Paulo factory workers, Corinthians have always cultivated an ethos of sweat and suffering, and though they led the field for two thirds of the campaign, this title win never came easily. Amazingly, of the club's 21 victories only four came by a margin of more than one goal. Portugal striker Liedson was their top scorer with 12 goals, while central midfielder Paulinho (along with his more defensive-minded colleague Ralf one of the stars of the show) weighed in with eight, and there were six each from the more attacking trio of Alex (who was back from Russia), Emerson and Willian. But it was a goal from Adriano - his only one in 18 months - that proved as important as any.

Injury-hit and dogged by rumours of a less-than-fully-professional recuperation process, the controversial striker's cost/benefit ratio was not looking impressive. Three rounds from the end, though, he came off the bench with Corinthians chasing the game at home to Atletico-Mineiro and scored an 89th-minute winner. His left foot has always been a weapon of surprising subtlety, and without this goal Corinthians would not have had a two-point margin over Vasco going into the final game. Adriano's celebrations, shirt off, overweight and wild with joy, was one of the images of the championship.

Other sides threatened, but the dash for the title turned into a two-horse race, with Vasco pushing Corinthians all the way. A Libertadores place guaranteed with their Brazilian Cup win, Vasco never slackened off, even after coach Ricardo Gomes suffered a stroke. His assistant Cristovao Borges stepped up wisely, harnessing a side built around the centre-back Dede's fearsome defending, the quiet midfield excellence of Romulo, the rapid double act down the right of striker Eder Luis and full-back Fagner, and the force and skill of Diego Souza cutting in from the left.

Vital goal...Adriano made his mark

Veteran midfielders Felipe and Juninho lent a hand, and when Diego Souza put them ahead on the last afternoon against Flamengo a fifth title of their own still looked a possibility. It was not to be, but at least Vasco had the consolation of finishing as Rio's top club, immediately ahead of the last two winners.

Defending champions Fluminense finished strongly under Abel Braga to come third, despite suffering an astonishing 16 defeats. A poor start and slipshod defending undermined their cause - but had centre-forward Fred not missed a month on international duty at the Copa America, and if his most effective supply line, Deco, had not been injured, then Flu might have gone close.

There were times in mid-season

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when Flamengo threatened a repeat of their 2009 title-winning campaign – especially when Ronaldinho suddenly found form in July and August. But he went through a slump in the later stages and Vanderley Luxemburgo's men had to sweat into the final day to secure their Libertadores place.

Hit a wall

Three Rio teams in the Libertadores was not too far off being four as Botafogo enjoyed a splendid campaign, with talismanic Uruguay centre-forward Sebastian Abreu benefiting from service from the flanks from Elkeson, Maicosuel and German Herrera. With a month to go they were shaping up as unlikely title challengers, but hit a wall. The 4-2-3-1 system – very much the fashionable formation – can put a huge strain on the central midfield duo, and this is what happened as the team ran out of legs, slipping down to ninth and costing coach Caio Junior his job.

The last Libertadores place was snapped up by Internacional with a 1-0 final afternoon win over Porto Alegre rivals Gremio. With the talented Oscar flourishing alongside Argentinian playmaker Andres D'Alessandro, Inter were impressive on their day and may have been capable of sustaining a challenge for the title had in-form centre-forward Leandro Damiao not picked up an injury.

Another top quality striker who struggled for fitness was Sao Paulo's Luis Fabiano. Brought back from Europe amid great pomp and expectations, he was only ready to take the field in October and it took him a while to recapture his goal touch.

In contrast to their title-winning years of 2006 to 2008, Sao Paulo have become very itchy on the trigger, firing coaches with unseemly haste. Towards the end of the campaign they turned, almost in desperation, to Emerson Leao, and to their immense disappointment finished a point off the Libertadores places.

Also disappointed were Figueirense of Florianoplis. The much-travelled veteran Julio Cesar and the lithe youngster Wellington Nem, on loan from Fluminense, formed one of the best strike partnerships in the competition, and before a late slump the team were in serious contention for a surprise slot in the Libertadores – a place which Coritiba ended up losing on the last day. Early form in the Brazilian Cup and the Parana state championship had caused some to appoint Coritiba as possible dark horses. Without ever living up to their billing, they nevertheless produced a solid campaign and were only deprived of the last Libertadores slot by a final-day defeat.

Four teams made up the mid-table. Their minds on the Club World Cup, Santos barely concentrated on the domestic campaign, though Neymar showed the occasional flash of genius and Borges could not stop scoring. Gremio were a disappointment, Luiz Felipe Scolari's Palmeiras were undermined by a turbulent atmosphere off the field, and Atletico Goianiense were happy with their best ever performance.

Harsh relegation battle

Behind these sides, the relegation battle was especially harsh on the Belo Horizonte clubs – who suffered because both the city's stadiums were closed for building work and so they had to drag all their home matches out of town, which clearly took its toll.

Atletico-MG, despite a strong squad, found themselves in trouble for the second year running, only pulling away from danger in the final weeks, and the situation of Cruzeiro was even more dramatic.

In the early stages of the 2011 Libertadores they looked like the outstanding team in the continent, but after elimination their domestic form slumped alarmingly. With Wallyson injured and fellow striker Thiago Ribeiro sold, the goals dried up. Bizarre coaching changes were also made, and the attacking Cuca gave way to the defensive Joel Santana, for example. Times were tense, and survival only ensured by a last-day 6-1 thrashing of Atletico. There was no such escape for the city's third force, and even a sudden late run of victories over the title contenders was not enough to stop America falling straight back down to the second division.

After two years in the top flight Ceara became yet another north-east club to fail to establish themselves and be relegated. Bahia, the region's other top flight club, just managed to escape the drop – and they will be joined next year by Recife duo Sport and Nautico, who were promoted along with a pair from Sao Paulo state, second division champions Portuguesa from the state capital and Ponte Preta from Campinas.

They replace two teams from the south: Avai of Florianopolis, whose latest spell in the first division lasted just three years and Atletico Paranaense of Curitiba, who were the major casualties.

Champions 10 years ago, Atletico are an ambitious club with an impressive stadium, due for use in the 2014 World Cup. But that 2001 triumph came under the old play-off system and the transition to the long league campaign has not been easy.

It could well be significant that – Cruzeiro in 2004 apart – the title has not left the major centres of Rio and Sao Paulo since the current format was introduced. With a new TV rights deal coming into effect in 2012, gaps will open up still further, making it even more difficult for the likes of Atletico-PR to compete with the big clubs.

Tim Vickery

For final league table, see page 111

Pain game...Luis Fabiano suffered fitness worries on his return to Sao Paulo

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
PAULINHO (Corinthians)
Streets ahead of the field – although Neymar of Santos is excluded on the grounds that his club didn't really compete – he replaced Elias in the engine room for the champions. Seldom glamorous but always useful, he even ended up as the club's second-top scorer.

COACH OF THE SEASON
JORGINHO (Figueirense)
A breakthrough year for the former right-back who was Dunga's assistant at the last World Cup. Under pressure at the start, he did remarkably well with an unfashionable club and a squad full of cast-offs, finishing two points off the Libertadores Cup places.

Full of creativity...Oscar

NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR
OSCAR (Internacional)
Affirmation year for the hat-trick hero of Brazil's World Youth Cup win. Produced his first solid campaign at senior level, scoring 10 goals and looking full of midfield creativity.

UNITED STATES

Galaxy claim the prize...at last

Rough and tumble...Beckham and his Galaxy team-mate Omar Gonzalez manage to bundle the ball away from Houston Dynamo's striker Calen Carr during the MLS Cup Final

At last, after four years, during which time their performances have ranged from so-so to just plain lousy, Los Angeles Galaxy at last produced a consistent season, one that was good enough to see them capture the MLS Cup in what may well be David Beckham's final competitive game for the club.

During the regular season's 34 games, Galaxy came through as the league's best side, winning the MLS Western Conference with a record of 67 points from 19 wins, five losses and 10 draws. Seattle Sounders were second with 63 points from an 18-7-9 record, followed by Real Salt Lake on 53 points (15-11-8).

The figures demonstrated that, yet again, the Western Conference was much stronger than the Eastern version. The East winners, Sporting Kansas City, picked up 51 points, followed by Houston (49) and Philadelphia (48).

The totals go a long way to explaining why many fans do not like the MLS play-off system. All six of those teams qualified for the play-offs, but Philadelphia Union could consider themselves mighty lucky: had they been playing in the West they would have finished sixth and would not have made the play-offs. Similarly, the East leaders Kansas City would have finished fifth in the West, which would not have guaranteed them an automatic play-off position.

The way the play-offs work is that the first three in each conference get an automatic place, while the fourth- and fifth-place finishers have to play an eliminator. The big surprise at that stage was that New York Red Bulls almost didn't make it – they slipped in as the 10th – and therefore the worst – qualifier with a mere 46 points.

That lowest-points total meant Bulls would not have home advantage, whoever they played. That same rule gave a huge advantage to Galaxy, who would enjoy home advantage throughout the play-offs, with the added bonus of also playing at home if they made the Final, as their ground, the Home Depot, had already been designated as the neutral venue.

Worthy win

Red Bulls travelled to Dallas and pulled off a worthy 2-0 win with goals from Joel Lindpere and – in the 98th minute – from Thierry Henry. In the other eliminator, Colorado Rapids beat Columbus Crew 1-0, the winner coming from Omar Cummings.

The eight-team field then played home-and-away Conference semi-finals, with the pairings decided on points totals. The lowest-ranked side, Red Bulls, therefore had to take on the top-ranked Galaxy. This was hardly what anyone had envisaged, or hoped for.

The two most expensively-assembled teams, each with three designated players (Landon Donovan, Beckham and Robbie Keane at LA, Henry, Rafa Marquez and goalkeeper Frank Rost at New York) had been thought of as opponents in a dream Final. Now one of them was set to be eliminated in the early stage. It was the Red Bulls who departed, beaten 1-0 in New York, and 2-1 in LA, but things were evidently livening up. The first game ended with an on-field brawl that saw Red Bulls' Marquez sent off, and thus out of the second game. Donovan upped the temperature by calling Bulls "the dirtiest team in MLS; it's a disgrace, we're here to play soccer".

The star of the two games was not one of the expensive DPs, but young American striker Mike Magee, who scored in both games. With Red Bulls eliminated, it seemed that the biggest threat to Galaxy came from Seattle, but Sounders blew their chances by losing 3-0 at Real Salt Lake. The return, played before 36,000 in Seattle, turned into a real

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nail-biter, as Sounders scored twice during the first hour but could not get the equalising goal.

Sounders, the most innovative and exciting of the play-off teams, could only rue what might have been had their inspirational midfielder Mauro Rosales been available. However, he had suffered a serious knee injury, the result of a clumsy tackle from an opponent, at the end of the regular season.

Strongest rival

Elsewhere, Houston – twice winners of the MLS Cup, in 2006 and 2007, took care of Philadelphia, winning 2-1 away and 1-0 in the return. Suddenly Kansas City appeared as Galaxy's strongest rival, with two 2-0 wins over Colorado, the 2011 champions.

That notion was quickly ended by Houston, who beat Kansas 2-0 in Kansas City to take the Eastern Conference title and move on to the Final. Houston reaching the Final had not been predicted by many; they are a hard-working team, without any outstanding stars, who play a solid game but are nothing to get excited about. Their key player was American midfielder Brad Davis, who had played in every game of the season – but he suffered a serious muscle-tear injury against Kansas, and was ruled out of the Final.

Houston's opponents would, unsurprisingly, be Galaxy, who had won the Western Conference with a convincing 3-1 win over Real Salt Lake. This was a rare occasion, for Galaxy – despite all their attacking talent – were not prolific scorers. Of their 19 regular-season wins, nine came via a 1-0 scoreline in games that were far too often just plain boring.

But against RSL – who had to play without injured key defender, Nat Borchers – the Galaxy attack sprung to life. Magee scored again, this time from a superb, inch-perfect cross from Beckham: the sort of goal that the Galaxy talent promised but rarely delivered.

Galaxy were thus overwhelming favourites – playing at home, at full strength, against the unfancied Dynamo, who were lacking their key player. At last, an award of some sort – after five seasons of far from scintillating on-field performances – appeared almost certain for Beckham.

And so it proved, although it was not a memorable Final. Galaxy, using only one substitute, were back to their miserly form, eking out yet another 1-0 win in what was basically a one-sided game. The lone goal was a beauty, featuring all three of Galaxy's stars – a headed flick from Beckham to Keane, a perfect pass on to Donovan who provided a smooth, inch-perfect finish – but there was little else to excite.

Beckham, we were told, had a cold, or an injury, or both. "He gutted it out tonight," said coach Bruce Arena. Maybe so, but it was not pretty. The idea that he was being treated favourably became particularly strong when he got away with a dangerous, clumsy tackle on Danny Cruz a minute into the second half. Later, as Beckham visibly tired, he was cautioned for a blatant, almost comical, rugby tackle on Carlos Costly.

Dynamo had little to offer by way of an attacking threat. They had only one shot on goal in the entire game. Add to that the fact Galaxy managed to get only three shots on target and the portrait of yet another tedious win emerges.

> MLS is still not exciting enough to draw in large numbers of new fans. And that verdict also applies to the new champions

Marketing gimmick

While Beckham's long-awaited triumph with Galaxy was good news for both the club's owners and for the league, it was also important for his coach, Arena. A first title with the ex-Manchester United and Real Madrid midfielder in tow was a counter to accusations that Arena's expensive signing had been nothing more than a marketing gimmick.

On the day after the Final, there were two items of sobering news. Beckham, his contract with Galaxy about to terminate, was still being coy about whether he would re-sign – his oft-repeated statements about being "committed" to the team notwithstanding.

Then came the TV ratings. This had been the perfect game for MLS, with Beckham in the Final, in his home stadium, packed with over 30,000 fans, and a nationally televised game at prime time on a Sunday evening. But the ratings were alarmingly poor: just 0.8million. Bad enough, but also acutely embarrassing because, over on the Fox Soccer Channel, they were simultaneously showing a taped replay of that day's Chelsea v Liverpool game – which, at 1.5m almost doubled the MLS audience. But both figures looked puny compared with the ratings for gridiron games played earlier that day: 12.7m and 14.2m.

The message seems clear enough. Despite its continued successes in stadium building, its growing attendances, and its new-found ability to lure stars, MLS is still not exciting enough to draw in large numbers of new fans. And, very definitely, that verdict applies to the new champions. Intriguingly, Galaxy became the first MLS team featuring designated players to win the championship. The DP scheme, which began in 2007, was meant to bring more glamour to the league.

Paul Gardner

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
DWAYNE DE ROSARIO
(DC United)
The midfielder beat Houston's Brad Davis and Brek Shea of Dallas to win the Most Valuable Player award after scoring 16 goals and supplying 12 assists in a season in which he played for three teams. He started the year with Toronto, was transferred to New York Red Bulls and then joined DC United.

COACH OF THE SEASON
BRUCE ARENA
(LA Galaxy)
The former USA national coach won his third MLS title after successes with DC United in 1996 and 1997.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
MAURO ROSALES
(Seattle Sounders)
The former Ajax attacker had an impressive first season in MLS after joining from River Plate.

Sixteen-goal haul...De Rosario

Face-off...New York Red Bulls' defender Marquez confronts Adam Cristman of Galaxy

JAPAN

Historic back-to-back titles for Kashiwa

Surprise winners...Kashiwa Reysol's players roar their delight as skipper Otani hoists the J.League championship shield as they celebrate the club's first-ever top-flight title

Kashiwa Reysol achieved the unprecedented feat of becoming J.League champions a year after winning the second division title. Their first-ever championship - clinched on the final day of the season – was a remarkable comeback after relegation in 2009 and coach Nelsinho, who took charge midway through that relegation campaign, has shared in the downs as well as the ups with his players.

Sanfrecce Hiroshima and Cerezo Osaka had both done well on their return to the top flight in previous seasons, so it was partly to be expected that Kashiwa could survive. But no one had tipped them to win the title. No one, that is, apart from Nelsinho.

The veteran Brazilian recalled watching the whole Nagoya Grampus team arriving by bus at last year's J.League awards ceremony and commenting to his interpreter how he wanted to arrive that way himself this term.

"We have led for some 80 per cent of the season and battled for the championship the whole way," he said after the final game – a 3-1 win in front of 54,441 fans at Urawa Reds.

"We produced the things we have been working on all season. I am very proud that we're the champions of this hard, 2011 season, grateful to the players who have followed me through these two years, and I congratulate them from the heart."

Nelsinho is no stranger to Japanese football. He had spells in charge at Verdy Kawasaki in the mid-90s and also at Nagoya Grampus from 2003-05, but those spells came at the end of Verdy's golden era and when Grampus were stuck in the doldrums. This time, he took over a team that had thoroughly lost its way and turned it around to become worthy champions.

Dead wood

The year in division two probably helped. Reysol cut away the dead wood and Nelsinho rebuilt the squad, starting with youngsters and then bringing in the foreign players he wanted – such as Brazilians Leandro Domingues in 2010 and then Jorge Wagner this year.

Wagner was originally brought as a defender but moved to a more attacking role on the left flank, from where he scored 11 goals in his 31 league appearances. And Leandro on the right was even more prolific, with 28 goals in his two seasons.

There is never any shortage of Brazilian players in Japan, but perhaps it took a coach of Nelsinho's stature to find and secure two such outstanding team players.

Reysol's triumph was far from being only about the Brazilians, though. It was also a victory for the squad – and for canny pre-match scouting and management, with Nelsinho changing his line-up and/or formation for almost every game. He made bold substitutions and it was to the credit of the players that they always seemed to know exactly what their mercurial boss wanted them to do.

In goal for his side, Takanori

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Sugeno is a highly agile keeper who had never played at the top level before. Previously with Yokohama FC, he was a fringe member of the Japan squad under Takeshi Okada.

Centre-backs Naoya Kondo and Tatsuya Masushima, along with midfielders Hidekazu Otani, Masakatsu Sawa and Akimi Barada provided a steadying influence in front of Sugeno, while full-backs Wataru Hashimoto, on the left, and 21-year old Hiroki Sakai were always ready to burst forward. Sakai and Barada also established themselves as important members of the Japan team battling to qualify for the Olympic Games.

With strikers Junya Tanaka, Masato Kudo and veteran Hideaki Kitajima all thriving on the improved service, Reysol won the title with a brand of sharp, hard-running, rapid counter-attacking football, and were forever first to the second ball. Even the departure of young striker Yuki Otsu to Borussia Monchengladbach failed to halt their march to the summit.

Kashiwa led from the opening day, thanks to a 3-0 victory over Cerezo Osaka, and stayed on top most of the way, although Yokohama F-Marinos, Nagoya Grampus and Gamba Osaka also had spells in front. Defending champions Nagoya started weakly but finished with six straight wins as they, Reysol and Gamba made a tremendous spurt for the line. Only two points separated the trio on the final day, but leaders Reysol made sure with that commanding victory at Saitama Stadium.

Nagoya's Australia striker Josh Kennedy was the league's top scorer for the second successive year with 19 goals, just ahead of relegated Ventforet Kofu's Mike Havenaar on 17. The son of naturalised former Grampus keeper Dido, Havenaar was one of the surprises of the season. He also came up from J2, and made his mark as a new kind of Japanese centre-forward in the national team as well as in league action. It is not known yet where he'll be next season but he is unlikely to go down with his club.

End of an era

The close of the season marked the end of an era at Gamba Osaka, where Akira Nishino stepped down after a decade in charge. He had led them to one J.League and one AFC Champions League triumph but regretted, on balance, that "one league championship in 10 years is not really enough."

Nishino joined Gamba from Kashiwa, where he led Reysol to their phantom league title of 2000 – the season they won more points than any other team over the then two-stage season but didn't make it to the championship play-off because they failed to win either stage. Nishino has been linked with several jobs but is as yet undecided about his future.

Nishino praised Kashiwa's triumph in glowing terms, saying: "I'd thought they'd probably falter eventually, but they accelerated towards the finish.

"You could feel their power expanding. It has been a fantastic performance. The players are not so extraordinary but the young ones, the inexperienced ones, have responded to the manager's expectations all season and you can feel what tremendous competition there is between them. It has been a wonderful year and they are truly worthy champions."

Kashima Antlers manager Oswaldo Oliveira also stepped down at the end of 2011 after five years in charge, which included three straight J.League titles from 2007-9. It had been an indifferent season for Kashima, whose sixth place finish was their joint-worst since 2006. Antlers did, however, have the compensation of winning the League Cup in October – the only Japanese trophy Oliveira had not won.

Vegalta Sendai, in the heart of the zone devastated by the March earthquake and tsunami, rose to the challenge of representing the stricken region and achieved their best-ever finish of fourth.

Their north-eastern rivals Montedio Yamagata were relegated, with Kofu and Avispa Fukuoka, while once-proud Urawa Reds dabbled with relegation to the last. They finished on 36 points, which would not have been enough to stay up in almost any other year.

Mike Plastow

For final league table, see page 113

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
LEANDRO DOMINGUES
(Kashiwa Reysol)
Quick and skilful out wide, he is also a team player who can cut inside to finish. Kashiwa's top scorer with 15 goals.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
HIROKI SAKAI
(Kashiwa Reysol)
Quick and powerfully built full-back who established a tremendous understanding with Domingues on the right. A bright prospect for the 2012 Olympics and 2014 World Cup.

COACH OF THE SEASON
NELSINHO (Kashiwa Reysol)
Having managed many of Brazil's leading teams, this meticulous coach has turned round Reysol's fortunes. Rarely reveals his emotions but enjoys total trust of players and staff.

Revitalised Reysol...Nelsinho

Hit man...Kennedy was the J.League's leading scorer for the second year running, scoring 19 times for his side, Nagoya Grampus

Storemags.com

SOUTH KOREA
Jeonbuk too strong for Ulsan

Hat-trick hero...Jeonbuk's Eninho (centre) scored three times in the play-off Final

Jeonbuk Motors capped a remarkable K-League season with a 4-2 aggregate victory over Ulsan in the 2011 championship play-off Final, with three of their goals from Brazilian striker Eninho.

The Jeonju-based club led the table for much of the season, scoring 71 goals in 32 games to clinch their second league title in three years and only the second in their 27-year history.

Their championship Final opponents, on the other hand, finished the regular season in sixth place and only clinched their play-off spot on the final day.

Ulsan beat reigning champions and third-place finishers Seoul in the first round of the play-offs before brushing aside Suwon Bluewings and Pohang Steelers. But their fine play-off form was not enough to overcome a rampant Jeonbuk, who never looked like being knocked off course.

Part of the reason for that might be explained by the relatively poor form of Seoul and Suwon, the league's biggest two clubs.

Barely a third of the way into the campaign, Seoul dismissed coach Kwan Hwang-bo – in his first season in charge– and were languishing in the lower reaches of the table. For big-spending Suwon, it was another disappointing end to a league season. Having missed out on the play-offs the previous two years, the 2008 champions slipped out in the second round after a dismal 3-1 penalty shoot-out defeat by Ulsan.

> The K-League Cup was at the centre of a match-rigging scandal

The first third of the campaign produced a league table with a decidedly lop-sided look as perennial last-placed Daegu, military side Sangju Sangmu and Daejeon Citizen were among the form sides, occupying the upper reaches of the league. By contrast, 2010 runners-up Jeju United and the same year's Asian Champions League winners Seongnam Ilhwa Chunma struggled, finishing ninth and 10th – although Seongnam did win the Korean FA Cup.

Ulsan won the K-League Cup, the lesser of the major national cup competitions, but the tournament was at the centre of a match-rigging scandal that cast a dark shadow over South Korean football. Dozens of players and coaches were caught up in the affair as the K-League came down heavily on those involved.

Bryan Kay

PLAYER OF THE YEAR
LEE DONG-GOOK
(Jeonbuk Motors)
The veteran was voted the league's most valuable player, with 16 goals and 15 assists.

NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR
LEE SEUNG-KI
(Gwangju)
Made his international debut as a substitute in South Korea's win over the United Arab Emirates in November.

COACH OF YEAR
CHOI KANG-HEE
(Jeonbuk Motors)
Lost just three league games and narrowly missed out in the Final of the Asian Champions League.

Success story...Choi Kang-hee

CAF CONFEDERATIONS CUP
Keeper Zniti is spot on

Goalkeeper Anas Zniti was the star of the show as Morocco's Maghreb Fes won their first continental title, beating Tunisia's Club Africain 6-5 in a penalty shoot-out to claim the Confederations Cup Final.

After the two legs had finished 1-1 on aggregate, Zniti saved two spot-kicks before stepping up and firing home the winning penalty himself.

Club Africain, whose compatriots Esperance had won the African Champions League title a few weeks earlier, went ahead through Cameroonian import Alexis Mendomo after just seven minutes of the first leg in Tunis and it seemed a rout was on the cards. But despite playing the last half-hour with 10 men after Samir Zekroumi was sent off, Maghreb Fes hung on and did not concede again.

A slip from Club Africain goalkeeper Sami Nefzi just before half time in the return allowed Moussa Tigana to level the tie for Maghreb Fes, who were unable to take advantage in normal time when the visitors had striker Ezekial Ndouassel dismissed.

Maghreb Fes' success meant three different Moroccan clubs have now won the annual trophy since it was first introduced in 2004.

Mark Gleeson

Down...Zekroumi beats Club Africain's Hamza Messaadi

ESM TEAM OF THE MONTH NOVEMBER 2011

European Sports Media

HOW IT WORKS

Every month, journalists from each member of the European Sports Media group select their first XI based on the best individual performances from Europe's top competitions. For details of how each ESM member voted, visit worldsoccer.com/esm11

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SEASON RANKING

Cummulative votes through the season (total votes cast in September, October and November 2011)

GOALKEEPERS

Manuel Neuer (Bayern Munich)	13 votes
Iker Casillas (Real Madrid)	5
Tim Krul (Newcastle United)	2
Joe Hart (Manchester City)	1
Pepe Reina (Liverpool)	1
Salvatore Sirigu (Paris Saint-Germain)	1
Marc-Andre Ter Stegen (B M'gladbach)	1
Wojciech Szczesny (Arsenal)	1
Victor Valdes (Barcelona)	1
Javi Varas (Sevilla)	1
Tolga Zengin (Trabzonspor)	1
Ron-Robert Zieler (Hanover)	1

DEFENDERS

Vincent Kompany (Manchester City)	11
Daniel Van Buyten (Bayern Munich)	9
Holger Badstuber (Bayern Munich)	7
Dani Alves (Barcelona	7
Marcelo (Real Madrid)	7
Patrice Evra (Manchester United)	4
Stephan Lichtsteiner (Juventus)	4
Phil Jones (Manchester United)	3
Thiago Silva (Milan)	3
Nemanja Vidic (Manchester United)	3
Andre Santos (Arsenal)	2
Mats Hummels (Borussia Dortmund)	2
Philipp Lahm (Bayern Munich)	2
Gerard Pique (Barcelona)	2
Rafinha (Bayern Munich)	2
Micah Richards (Manchester City)	2
John Terry (Chelsea)	2
Alvaro Arbeloa (Real Madrid)	1
Henri Bedimo (Montpellier)	1
Leonardo Bonucci (Juventus)	1
Jose Bosingwa (Chelsea)	1
Ricardo Carvalho (Real Madrid)	1
Giorgio Chiellini (Juventus)	1
Dante (Borussia Monchengladbach)	1
Rio Ferdinand (Manchester United)	1
Paulo Jorge (APOEL Nicosia)	1
Ledley King (Tottenham Hotspur)	1
Aleksandar Kolarov (Manchester City)	1
Diego Lugano (Paris Saint-Germain)	1
Michel Bastos (Lyon)	1
Pepe (Real Madrid)	1
Lukasz Piszczek (Borussia Dortmund)	1
Adil Rami (Valencia)	1
Sergio Ramos (Real Madrid)	1
Marcel Schmelzer (Borussia Dortmund)	1
Chris Smalling (Manchester United)	1
Nicolas Spolli (Catania)	1
Kyle Walker (Tottenham Hotspur)	1

MIDFIELDERS

Xavi (Barcelona)	11
Franck Ribery (Bayern Munich)	8
David Silva (Manchester City)	8
Cesc Fabregas (Barcelona)	6
Andrea Pirlo (Juventus)	6
Marco Reus (Borussia Monchengladbach)	5
Nani (Manchester United)	4
Bastian Schweinsteiger (Bayern Munich)	4
Mario Gotze (Borussia Dortmund)	3
Javier Pastore (Paris Saint-Germain)	3
Kevin-Prince Boateng (Milan)	2
Mesut Ozil (Real Madrid)	2
Andres Iniesta (Barcelona)	2
Toni Kroos (Bayern Munich)	2
Claudio Marchisio (Juventus)	2
Alex Song (Arsenal)	2
Xabi Alonso (Real Madrid)	2
Charlie Adam (Liverpool)	1
Pablo Aimar (Benfica)	1
Angel Di Maria (Real Madrid)	1
Kaka (Real Madrid)	1
Frank Lampard (Chelsea)	1
Ezequiel Lavezzi (Napoli)	1
Dries Mertens (PSV Eindhoven)	1
Jon Obi Mikel (Chelsea)	1
Samir Nasri (Manchester City)	1
Scott Parker (Tottenham Hotspur)	1
Rafael Van der Vaart (Tottenham Hotspur)	1

FORWARDS

Lionel Messi (Barcelona)	23
Robin Van Persie (Arsenal)	15
Cristiano Ronaldo (Real Madrid)	13
Mario Gomez (Bayern Munich)	9
Wayne Rooney (Manchester United)	5
Sergio Aguero (Manchester City)	4
Gonzalo Higuain (Real Madrid)	3
Mario Balotelli (Manchester City)	2
Juan Mata (Chelsea)	2
Roberto Soldado (Valencia)	2
Karim Benzema (Real Madrid)	1
Edinson Cavani (Napoli)	1
Antonio Di Natale (Udinese)	1
Falcao (Atletico Madrid)	1
Klaas-Jan Huntelaar (Schalke)	1
Zlatan Ibrahimovic (Milan)	1
Miroslav Klose (Lazio)	1
Thomas Muller (Bayern Munich)	1

ESM QR CODE

To see how all our colleagues from ESM voted this month, scan the QR code using any free QR reader that can be downloaded to your smartphone. You can also see the votes by logging on to bit.ly/vfI98C

www.worldsoccer.com

New look! New features! New writers!

PLUS twice-weekly columns from Brian Glanville and Keir Radnedge

Handy...two-goal Dirar (left) helped Club Brugge to win in Slovenia

BELGIUM

Stunning Europa League comeback

Club Brugge came from three goals down with 16 minutes remaining to win 4-3 away to Maribor in the Europa League. Nabil Dirar (twice), Joseph Akpala and Ryan Donk were on target in Slovenia for the visitors.

A 1-0 victory away to Westerlo the following weekend in the Belgian league kept the club on the tails of Anderlecht and Gent, and meant new coach Christoph Daum had won four out of four since taking over from Adrie Koster.

BULGARIA

Winter champions

Ludogorets, who were playing football in the third tier two years ago, are honorary "winter champions" after scoring twice in the last four minutes to draw 2-2 at second-placed CSKA and go into the mid-season break top on goal difference. Junior Moraes scored twice for CSKA before Brazilian substitute Juninho Quixada and former Bulgaria striker Ivan Stoyanov stunned the home crowd.

Club Results

EUROPE

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

● *Details of the final round of group games will appear in the next issue*

Group A

Nov 22
Bayern Munich (Ger) 3 (Ribery 3, 69, Gomez 24)
Villarreal (Spa) 1 (De Guzman 50)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 66,000. **Ref:** Strombergsson (Swe)
Bayern: Neuer - Rafinha, Van Buyten, Boateng, Lahm, Tymoshchuk, Alaba, Robben (Olic 76), Kroos, Ribery (Pranjic 81), Gomez (Muller 72).
Villarreal: Diego Lopez - Mario, Musacchio, Marchena, Joan Oriol, Angel (Senna 70), De Guzman (Wakaso 63), Bruno, Perez, Borja Valero (Joselu 78), Marco Ruben.

Nov 22
Napoli (Ita) 2 (Cavani 17, 49)
Manchester City (Eng) 1 (Balotelli 33)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 57,575. **Ref:** Skomina (Sln)
Napoli: De Sanctis - Campagnaro, Cannavaro, Aronica, Maggio, Inler (Dzemaili 58), Gargano, Dossena (Fernandez 89), Hamsik, Lavezzi, Cavani (Pandev 83).
Man City: Hart - Zabaleta (Johnson 86), Kompany, Lescott, Kolarov, De Jong (Nasri 70), Silva, Y Toure, Milner, Balotelli, Dzeko (Aguero 81).

Dec 7
Manchester City 2
Bayern Munich 0

Dec 7
Villarreal 0
Napoli 2

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP A – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bayern	6	4	1	1	11	6	13
Napoli	6	3	2	1	10	6	11
Man City	6	3	1	2	9	6	10
Villarreal	6	0	0	6	2	14	0

Group B

Nov 22
CSKA Moscow (Rus) 0
Lille (Fra) 2 (V Berezutsky og 49, Sow 64)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 19,100. **Ref:** Kralovec (Cze)
CSKA: Gabulov - Nababkin, V Berezutsky, Ignashevich (Schennikov 74), A Berezutsky, Aldonin, Mamaev, Oliseh, Dzagoev, Cauna (Serderov 87), Vagner Love.
Lille: Landreau - Debuchy, Rozehnal, Chedjou, Beria, Mavuba, Balmont, Gueye, Cole (Payet 87), Sow (Jelen 74), Hazard (De Melo 90+2).

Nov 22
Trabzonspor (Tur) 1 (Altintop 23)
Internazionale (Ita) 1 (Alvarez 18)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 21,611. **Ref:** Atkinson (Eng)
Trabzonspor: Tolga - Celustka, Glowacki, Giray, Cech, Serkan (Mierzejewski 64), Zokora, Colman, Alanzinho (Paulo Henrique 85), Altintop, Burak.
Inter: Julio Cesar - Nagatomo, Samuel, Lucio, Chivu, Cambiasso, Zanetti, Alvarez (Faraoni 89), Stankovic, Zarate (Coutinho 69), Milito (Pazzini 86).

Dec 7
Internazionale 1
CSKA Moscow 2

Dec 7
Lille 0
Trabzonspor 0

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP B – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Inter	6	3	1	2	8	7	10
CSKA Moscow	6	2	2	2	9	8	8
Trabzonspor	6	1	4	1	3	5	7
Lille	6	1	3	2	6	6	6

Group C

Nov 22
Manchester United (Eng) 2 (Berbatov 30, Fletcher 59)
Benfica (Por) 2 (Jones og 3, Aimar 61)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 74,873. **Ref:** Cakir (Tur)
Man United: De Gea - Fabio (Smalling 82), Ferdinand, Jones, Evra, Fletcher, Carrick, Valencia (Hernandez 80), Nani, Young, Berbatov.
Benfica: Artur - Pereira, Luisao (Miguel Vitor 58), Garay, Emerson, Javi Garcia, Witsel, Gaitan (Matic 68), Aimar (Ruben Amorim 83), Bruno Cesar, Rodrigo.

Nov 22
Otelul Galati (Rom) 2 (Giurgiu 75, Antal 81)
Basle (Swi) 3 (F Frei 10, A Frei 14, Streller 37)
HT: 0-3. **Att:** 5,787. **Ref:** Hagen (Nor)
Otelul: Grahovac - Rapa, Perendija, Sarghi, Salageanu, Filip, Neagu (Viglianti 67; Paraschiv 84), Giurgiu, Antal, Pena, Iorga (Ilie 66).
Basle: Sommer - Steinhofer, Abraham, Dragovic, Park, Shaqiri (Zoua 82), Huggel (Cabral 44), G Xhaka, A Frei (Chipperfield 74), Streller, F Frei.

Dec 7
Basle 2
Manchester United 1

Dec 7
Benfica 1
Otelul Galati 0

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP C – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Benfica	6	3	3	0	8	4	12
Basle	6	3	2	1	11	10	11
Man United	6	2	3	1	11	8	9
Otelul	6	0	0	6	3	11	0

Group D

Nov 22
Lyon (Fra) 0
Ajax (Hol) 0
Att: 35,070. **Ref:** Eriksson (Swe)
Lyon: Lloris - Reveillere, Cris, Lovren, Cissokho, Gourcuff, Kallstrom, Briand (Lacazette 85), Lopez (Ederson 73), Michel Bastos, Gomis.
Ajax: Vermeer - Van der Wiel (Blind 67), Alderweireld, Vertonghen, Anita, Enoh, Eriksen, Janssen, Sulejmani, Ebecilio (Klaassen 85), Lodeiro (Lukoki 89).

Nov 22
Real Madrid (Spa) 6 (Benzema 2, 66, Callejon 7, 49, Higuain 9, Ozil 20)
Dinamo Zagreb (Cro) 2 (Beqiraj 81, Tomecak 90)
HT: 4-0. **Att:** 65,415. **Ref:** Kelly (Rlr)
Real Madrid: Adan - Diarra, Varane, Sergio Ramos (Raul Albiol 46), Fabio Coentrao, Sahin, Xabi Alonso (Granero 46), Callejon, Ozil (Altintop 46), Benzema, Higuain.
Dinamo: Kelava - Cufre, Vida (Ademi 63), Tonel, Ibanez, Calello, Kovacic, Badelj, Sammir (Tomecak 82), Alispahic (Leko 46), Beqiraj.

Dec 7
Ajax 0
Real Madrid 3

Dec 7
Dinamo Zagreb 1
Lyon 7

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP D – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Real Madrid	6	6	0	0	19	2	18
Lyon	6	2	2	2	9	7	8
Ajax	6	2	2	2	6	6	8
Dinamo Zagreb	6	0	0	6	3	22	0

Group E

Nov 23
Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) 2 (Derdiyok 73, Friedrich 90+1)
Chelsea (Eng) 1 (Drogba 48)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 29,285. **Ref:** Kassai (Hun)
Leverkusen: Leno - Schwaab (Schurrle 57), Friedrich, Toprak, Kadlec (Derdiyok 71), Bender, Rolfes, Castro, Ballack, Sam, Kiessling (Oczipka 82).
Chelsea: Cech - Ivanovic, David Luiz (Alex 69), Terry, Bosingwa, Raul Meireles (Mikel 80), Ramires, Lampard, Sturridge, Mata (Malouda 66), Drogba.

Nov 23
Valencia (Spa) 7 (Jonas 10, Soldado 13, 35, 39, Pablo 68, Aduriz 70, Tino Costa 81)
Genk (Blg) 0
HT: 4-0. **Att:** 35,086. **Ref:** Chapron (Fra)
Valencia: Diego Alves - Miguel, Victor Ruiz (Parejo 46), Rami, Mathieu, Mehmet, Tino Costa, Pablo, Jonas, Feghouli (Piatti 57), Soldado (Aduriz 65).
Genk: Koteles - Vanden Borre, Nadson, Hyland (Limbombe 61), Pudil, Camus, Tozser, Buffel, Barda (Nwanganga 71), De Bruyne, Vossen (Sarr 46).

Dec 6
Chelsea 3
Valencia 0

Dec 6
Genk 1
Bayer Leverkusen 1

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP E – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chelsea	6	3	2	1	13	4	11
Leverkusen	6	3	1	2	8	8	10
Valencia	6	2	2	2	12	7	8
Genk	6	0	3	3	2	16	3

Group F

Nov 23
Arsenal (Eng) 2 (Van Persie 49, 86)
Borussia Dortmund (Ger) 1 (Kagawa 90+2)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 59,531. **Ref:** De Bleeckere (Blg)
Arsenal: Szczesny - Koscielny (Djourou 83), Mertesacker, Vermaelen, Andre Santos, Song, Walcott (Diaby 85), Ramsey, Arteta, Gervinho (Benayoun 74), Van Persie.
Dortmund: Weidenfeller - Piszczek, Felipe Santana, Hummels, Schmelzer, Bender (Leitner 25), Kehl (Barrios 64), Gotze (Perisic 29), Kagawa, Grosskreutz, Lewandowski.

Nov 23
Marseille (Fra) 0
Olympiakos (Gre) 1 (Fetfatzidis 82)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 25,392. **Ref:** Rizzoli (Ita)
Marseille: Mandanda - Kabore, Diawara, Nkoulou, Traore, Diarra, Valbuena (Gonzalez 72), Cheyrou (Mbia 61), Remy, A Ayew, J Ayew (Gignac 61).
Olympiakos: Megyeri - Torosidis, Papadopoulos, Mellberg, Marcano, Maniatis, Modesto, Mirallas, David Fuster (Yeste 54), Holebas (Fetfatzidis 75), Djebbour (Potouridis 89).

Dec 6
Borussia Dortmund 2
Marseille 3

Dec 6
Olympiakos 3
Arsenal 1

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP F – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arsenal	6	3	2	1	7	6	11
Marseille	6	3	1	2	7	4	10
Olympiakos	6	3	0	3	8	6	9
Dortmund	6	1	1	4	6	12	4

Group G

Nov 23
Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr) 0
Porto (Por) 2 (Hulk 79, Rat og 90)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 42,565. **Ref:** Thomson (Sco)
Shakhtar: Rybka - Kobin (Douglas Costa 87), Kucher, Rakitskyi, Rat, Hubschman, Fernandinho, Eduardo (Jadson 59), Mkhitaryan, Willian (Alex Teixeira 69), Luiz Adriano.
Porto: Helton - Maicon, Otamendi, Rolando, Pereira, Joao Moutinho, Defour (Souza 88), Fernando, Hulk, J Rodriguez (Silvestre Varela 81), Djalma (C Rodriguez 74).

Nov 23
Zenit St Petersburg (Rus) 0
APOEL Nicosia (Cyp) 0
Att: 21,500. **Ref:** Brych (Ger)
Zenit: Malafeev - Anyukov, Hubocan, Lombaerts, Criscito, Denisov, Shirokov (Lazovic 87), Fayzulin, Zyryanov (Bystrov 55), Danny, Bukharov.
APOEL: Pardo - Solomou, Marcelo Oliveira, Paulo Jorge, Alexandrou (Ilia 46), Nuno Morais, Hello Pinto, Charalambides, Manduca, Trickovski (Adorno 89), Ailton (Jahic 67).

CYPRUS

Leaders lose top men

The Cyprus Football Association have banned the coach, Neophytos Larkou, and club president Miltiades Neophytou of league leaders Omonia for six months after they were found guilty of shoving and trying to hit referee Christos Elia after a 1-1 draw at Anagennisi Dherynia earlier in the season.

ENGLAND

Ref's break new ground

Japanese referee Masaaki Toma became the first foreign official to take charge of an FA Cup match. He officiated in third-tier Brentford's 1-0 first-round victory over non-league Basingstoke Town.

Former Manchester United and West Bromwich Albion defender Ronnie Wallwork was sentenced to 15 months in jail for selling on parts from stolen cars.

The 34-year-old, who was capped four times by England during the Under-20 World Cup in 1997, last played professional football in 2008, for Sheffield Wednesday.

Foreign first...referee Toma

14 different nationalities represented Arsenal during their 1-1 draw with Fulham, setting a new League record

Dec 6
APOEL Nicosia 0
Shakhtar Donetsk 2

Dec 6
Porto 0
Zenit St Petersburg 0

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP G – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
APOEL	6	2	3	1	6	6	9
Zenit	6	2	3	1	7	5	9
Porto	6	2	2	2	7	7	8
Shakhtar	6	1	2	3	6	8	5

Group H

Nov 23
BATE Borisov (Bls) 0
Viktoria Plzen (Cze) 1 (Bakos 42)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 26,520. **Ref:** Blom (Hol)
BATE: Gutor - Bordachev, Simic, Filipenko, Yurevich, Pavlov (Gordeychuk 69), A Volodko, Kontsevoy (Rudik 75), Bressan, Baga, Skavysh (Kezman 77).
Plzen: Cech - Rajtoral, Sevinsky, Bystron, Limbersky, Horvath, Jiracek, Petrzela (Fillo 83), Kolar, Pilar (Reznik 90+1), Bakos (Duris 79).

Nov 23
Milan (Ita) 2 (Ibrahimovic 20, Boateng 54)
Barcelona (Spa) 3 (Van Bommel og 14, Messi pen 31, Xavi 63)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 78,927. **Ref:** Stark (Ger)
Milan: Abbiati - Abate, Nesta (Bonera 66), Thiago Silva, Zambrotta, Aquilani, Van Bommel (Nocerino 72), Seedorf, Boateng, Robinho (Alexandre Pato 46), Ibrahimovic.
Barcelona: Valdes - Puyol, Mascherano, Abidal, Xavi, Busquets, Keita, Thiago (Dos Santos 90+1), Fabregas (Pedro 80), Messi, Villa (Sanchez 68).

Dec 6
Barcelona 4
BATE Borisov 0

Dec 6
Viktoria Plzen 2
Milan 2

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP H – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona	6	5	1	0	20	4	16
Milan	6	2	3	1	11	8	9
Plzen	6	1	2	3	4	11	5
BATE	6	0	2	4	2	14	2

Top 2 in each group qualify for 1st knockout round; 3rd-placed teams enter Europa League at 1st knockout round stage

EUROPA LEAGUE

Group A
Nov 30: Rubin Kazan (Rus) 4 Shamrock Rovers (Rlr) 1; Tottenham Hotspur (Eng) 1 PAOK Salonika (Gre) 2.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
PAOK	5	3	2	0	9	5	11
Rubin Kazan	5	3	1	1	10	4	10
Tottenham	5	2	1	2	5	4	7
Shamrock	5	0	0	5	4	15	0

Group B
Nov 30: Standard Liege (Blg) 2 Hanover (Ger) 0; Vorskla Poltava (Ukr) 1 Copenhagen (Den) 1.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Standard	5	3	2	0	8	1	11
Hanover	5	2	2	1	6	6	8
Copenhagen	5	1	2	2	5	8	5
Vorskla	5	0	2	3	3	7	2

Group C
Nov 30: Legia Warsaw (Pol) 0 PSV Eindhoven (Hol) 3; Rapid Bucharest (Rom) 1 Hapoel Tel Aviv (Isr) 3.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
PSV	5	4	1	0	11	4	13
Legia	5	3	0	2	7	7	9
H Tel Aviv	5	1	1	3	8	9	4
Rapid Buch'st	5	1	0	4	4	10	3

Group D
Dec 1: Sporting Lisbon (Por) 2 Zurich (Swi) 0; Vaslui (Rom) 0 Lazio (Ita) 0.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sporting L'bon	5	4	0	1	8	2	12
Vaslui	5	1	3	1	5	6	6
Lazio	5	1	3	1	5	5	6
Zurich	5	0	2	3	3	8	2

Group E
Dec 1: Maccabi Tel Aviv (Isr) 2 Besiktas (Tur) 3; Stoke City (Eng) 1 Dynamo Kiev (Ukr) 1.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Stoke	5	3	2	0	9	4	11
Besiktas	5	3	0	2	10	6	9
Dynamo Kiev	5	1	3	1	4	4	6
M Tel Aviv	5	0	1	4	5	14	1

Group F
Dec 1: Athletic Bilbao (Spa) 2 Slovan Bratislava (Slk) 1; Salzburg (Aut) 2 Paris Saint-Germain (Fra) 0.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP F

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Athletic B'bao	5	4	1	0	9	4	13
Salzburg	5	2	1	2	8	6	7
PSG	5	2	1	2	4	5	7
Slovan B'slava	5	0	1	4	2	8	1

Group G
Nov 30: Malmo (Swe) 0 AZ Alkmaar (Hol) 0; Metalist Kharkiv (Ukr) 4 Austria Vienna (Aut) 1.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP G

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Metalist	5	4	1	0	14	5	13
AZ	5	1	4	0	9	6	7
Austria	5	1	2	2	8	11	5
Malmo	5	0	1	4	4	13	1

Group H
Nov 30: Braga (Por) 1 Birmingham City (Eng) 0; Maribor (Sln) 3 Club Brugge (Blg) 4.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP H

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Club Brugge	5	3	1	1	11	8	10
Braga	5	3	1	1	11	5	10
Birmingham	5	2	1	2	7	8	7
Maribor	5	0	1	4	6	14	1

Group I
Nov 30: Celtic (Sco) 0 Atletico Madrid (Spa) 1; Rennes (Fra) 0 Udinese (Ita) 0.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP I

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Atletico M'rid	5	3	1	1	8	3	10
Udinese	5	2	2	1	5	6	8
Celtic	5	1	2	2	5	6	5
Rennes	5	0	3	2	4	7	3

Group J
Dec 1: AEK Larnaca (Cyp) 2 Maccabi Haifa (Isr) 1; Schalke (Ger) 2 Steaua Bucharest (Rom) 1.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP J

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Schalke	5	3	2	0	10	2	11
M Haifa	5	2	0	3	10	9	6
Steaua	5	1	2	2	6	10	5
AEK Larnaca	5	1	2	2	3	8	5

Group K
Dec 1: OB Odense (Den) 1 Wisla Krakow (Pol) 2; Twente Enschede (Hol) 1 Fulham (Eng) 0.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP K

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Twente	5	4	1	0	13	5	13
Fulham	5	2	1	2	7	4	7
Wisla	5	2	0	3	6	12	6
OB	5	1	0	4	7	12	3

Group L
Dec 1: AEK Athens (Gre) 1 Anderlecht (Blg) 2; Lokomotiv Moscow (Rus) 3 Sturm Graz (Aut) 1.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP L

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Anderlecht	5	5	0	0	13	2	15
Lokomotiv M	5	4	0	1	11	6	12
Sturm	5	1	0	4	4	11	3
AEK Athens	5	0	0	5	5	14	0

Top 2 in each group qualify for 1st knockout round, where they will be joined by the 8 3rd-placed teams from the Champions League group stage

AUSTRIA

Nov 19: Wiener Neustadt 3 Sturm 1; Wacker 1 Mattersburg 1; Admira 0 Austria 3; Kapfenberger 1 Ried 3.
Nov 20: Rapid 4 Salzburg 2.
Nov 26: Ried 1 Wacker 0; Mattersburg 1 Rapid 2; Salzburg 6 Kapfenberger 0; Austria 2 Wiener Neustadt 2.
Nov 27: Sturm 3 Admira 1.
Dec 3: Austria 0 Mattersburg 0; Kapfenberger 0 Rapid 0; Admira 1 Ried 1.
Dec 4: Wacker 1 Sturm 0; Wiener Neustadt 0 Salzburg 0.

AUSTRIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Austria	17	7	7	3	33	22	28
Rapid	17	7	7	3	28	18	28
Ried	17	7	7	3	26	17	28
Admira	17	7	7	3	28	24	28
Salzburg	17	6	6	5	27	19	24
Sturm	17	6	5	6	27	26	23
Wacker	17	4	8	5	19	24	20
W Neustadt	17	4	7	6	16	25	19
Mattersburg	17	2	8	7	20	25	14
Kapfenberger	17	2	4	11	13	37	10

36-round season (9x4); bottom team will be relegated

BELARUS

BELARUS – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
BATE (C)	33	18	12	3	53	20	66
Shakhtyor	33	17	10	6	46	24	61
Gomel	33	13	15	5	36	24	54
Dinamo M'sk	33	14	7	12	50	43	49
Belshina	33	12	12	9	41	35	48
Torpedo	33	9	14	10	37	41	41
Naftan	33	10	7	16	35	45	37
Neman	33	8	13	12	33	45	37
Minsk	33	8	11	14	33	40	35
Dinamo B'st	33	8	11	14	38	46	35
Vitebsk (R)*	33	8	8	17	29	46	32
Dnepr (R)	33	6	14	13	29	51	32

**Vitebsk relegated after losing to Partizan Minsk, 3-2 on agg, in the rel/prom play-off*

BELGIUM

Regular season
Nov 18: OH Leuven 1 Standard 3.
Nov 19: Genk 3 Westerlo 0; Lokeren 1 Beerschot 1; Kortrijk 0 Gent 4; Mechelen 1 Zulte Waregem 1; Mons 2 Lierse 1.
Nov 20: Anderlecht 3 St Truiden 1; Club Brugge 1 Cercle Brugge 0.
Nov 25: Standard 3 Mechelen 2.
Nov 26: Zulte Waregem 2 Anderlecht 3; Beerschot 0 Kortrijk 1; St Truiden 2 OH Leuven 1; Lierse 0 Club Brugge 1; Westerlo 2 Mons 1; Cercle Brugge 1 Lokeren 1.
Nov 27: Gent 2 Genk 0.
Dec 2: Beerschot 2 Genk 0.
Dec 3: St Truiden 2 Mons 3; Zulte Waregem 1 Lokeren 1; Lierse 2 Mechelen 2; Westerlo 0 Club Brugge 1; Cercle Brugge 1 Kortrijk 2.
Dec 4: Anderlecht 0 OH Leuven 0; Standard 0 Gent 0.

ESTONIA

Reim's dream nine

Flora Tallinn retained the league title with a game to spare after beating Viljandi 4-0 with goals from Hannes Anier (two), Valeri Minkenen and Markus Jurgenson. Flora have now won nine titles, with coach Martin Reim adding the last two to the seven he won as a player.

While Flora will enter next season's Champions League, the Europa League places go to Nomme Kalju, Trans Narva and whoever wins the Estonian Cup in the spring.

GERMANY

Dortmund's annual double in Munich

Borussia Dortmund won 1-0 in Munich to make history as the only team ever to win two league matches away to Bayern in a single calendar year.

Hamburg, meanwhile, avoided an unwanted club record of 11 consecutive home games without a win by beating Hoffenheim 2-0.

Dynamo Dresden have been banned from playing in next season's German Cup after crowd trouble marred their 2-0 defeat away to Borussia Dortmund.

Record...Mario Gotze (right) scores Dortmund's latest winner in Munich

BELGIUM – REGULAR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Anderlecht	16	11	3	2	32	13	36
Gent	16	10	3	3	38	18	33
Club Brugge	16	9	4	3	29	18	31
Standard	16	8	5	3	22	20	29
Cercle Brugge	16	7	6	3	20	15	27
Kortrijk	16	8	3	5	23	19	27
Mons	16	6	5	5	31	27	23
Genk	16	6	5	5	28	24	23
Beerschot	16	5	6	5	27	23	21
Lokeren	16	4	6	6	22	24	18
Mechelen	16	4	4	8	20	32	16
OH Leuven	16	4	3	9	17	29	15
Z Waregem	16	2	8	6	15	22	14
Lierse	16	2	7	7	12	21	13
St Truiden	16	2	4	10	24	39	10
Westerlo	16	2	4	10	13	29	10

30-round regular season (15x2); top 6 enter championship play-offs, teams placed 7th to 14th enter Europa League place play-offs, bottom 2 (15th & 16th) enter relegation play-off (1 of them will go down)

BULGARIA

Nov 11: Vidima-Rakovski 0 Cherno More 0.
Nov 12: Svetkavitsa 0 Slavia 3; Lokomotiv Plovdiv 2 Botev 1; CSKA 3 Minyor 1.
Nov 13: Lokomotiv Sofia 1 Montana 1; Beroe 1 Levski 2; Chernomorets 0 Ludogorets 0.
Nov 18: Botev 1 Beroe 1.
Nov 19: Montana 1 Slavia 2; Cherno More 1 Svetkavitsa 0; Ludogorets 2 Kaliakra 0; Levski 2 Vidima-Rakovski 1.
Nov 20: Minyor 0 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 0; Lokomotiv Sofia 0 Chernomorets 4; Lovech 0 CSKA 2.
Nov 26: Kaliakra 0 Lokomotiv Sofia 0; Beroe 0 Minyor 0.
Nov 27: Svetkavitsa 0 Levski 1; Lokomotiv Plovdiv 2 Lovech 1; Vidima-Rakovski 0 Botev 1; Chernomorets 2 Montana 0.
Nov 28: Slavia 1 Cherno More 1; CSKA 2 Ludogorets 2.

BULGARIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ludogorets	15	11	3	1	33	7	36
CSKA	15	11	3	1	32	10	36
Chernomorets	15	10	3	2	25	5	33
Levski	15	11	0	4	26	16	33
Slavia	15	8	3	4	24	20	27
Lok Plovdiv	15	8	3	4	22	18	27
Lovech	14	7	4	3	24	14	25
Cherno More	15	7	4	4	17	7	25
Minyor	15	3	6	6	14	18	15
Botev	15	3	5	7	12	20	14
Montana	15	3	5	7	12	24	14
Lok Sofia	15	3	4	8	16	26	13
Beroe	15	3	3	9	13	23	12
V-Rakovski	15	2	4	9	8	25	10
Kaliakra	14	1	4	9	9	24	7
Svetkavitsa	15	0	2	13	3	33	2

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated, 3rd bottom will enter rel/prom play-off

CROATIA

Nov 18: Zagreb 1 Cibalia 1; Split 0 Dinamo 3.
Nov 19: Varazdin 3 Inter 2; Sibenik 1 Lucko 1; Zadar 2 Osijek 1; Istra 2 Slaven 1; Lokomotiva 1 Hajduk 0.
Nov 20: Rijeka 3 Karlovac 0.
Nov 25: Lokomotiva 1 Varazdin 0.
Nov 26: Split 1 Cibalia 1; Zagreb 1 Slaven 1; Istra 2 Karlovac 0; Zadar 1 Lucko 0; Sibenik 1 Hajduk 2; Rijeka 1 Osijek 0.
Nov 27: Inter 0 Dinamo 0.
Dec 2: Lokomotiva 2 Inter 0.
Dec 3: Varazdin 2 Sibenik 1; Lucko 1 Rijeka 1; Karlovac 3 Zagreb 3; Slaven 2 Split 0; Cibalia 2 Dinamo 2.
Dec 4: Hajduk 1 Zadar 0; Osijek 2 Istra 1.

CROATIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo	17	13	3	1	39	7	42
Hajduk	17	11	3	3	33	12	36
Split	17	9	4	4	27	20	31
Slaven	17	9	4	4	24	17	31
Osijek	17	7	5	5	24	21	26
Lokomotiva	17	7	4	6	20	16	25
Rijeka	17	6	6	5	19	15	24
Inter	17	7	3	7	18	20	24
Cibalia	17	6	5	6	16	21	23
Zagreb	17	6	4	7	18	25	22
Zadar	17	6	4	7	18	26	22
Istra	17	4	5	8	15	21	17
Lucko	17	3	6	8	14	20	15
Karlovac	17	4	3	10	15	33	15
Sibenik	17	3	5	9	16	20	14
Varazdin	17	2	2	13	11	33	8

30-round season (15x2); bottom 5 will be relegated

CYPRUS

Regular season

Nov 19: Anagennisi 0 Anorthosis 2; Apollon 5 Alki 1; APOEL 2 Ermis 0; AEK 0 AEL 0.
Nov 20: Nea Salamina 1 ENP 1; Ethnikos 0 Omonia 1.
Nov 21: Olympiakos 0 Aris 0.
Nov 26: Anorthosis 0 AEK 1; AEL 3 Olympiakos 2.
Nov 27: Alki 0 Ethnikos 1; Ermis 3 Anagennisi 2; ENP 0 APOEL 2; Aris 2 Apollon 0.
Nov 28: Omonia 2 Nea Salamina 2.
Dec 2: APOEL 2 Anagennisi 0.
Dec 3: Olympiakos 1 Anorthosis 2; Apollon 0 AEL 3; ENP 1 Omonia 1.
Dec 4: Nea Salamina 0 Alki 1; Ethnikos 4 Aris 0.
Dec 5: AEK 2 Ermis 0.

CYPRUS – REGULAR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Omonia	12	8	4	0	20	6	28
AEL	12	8	3	1	14	3	27
APOEL	12	8	2	2	19	4	26
Anorthosis	12	6	4	2	13	7	22
AEK	12	5	5	2	13	8	20
Apollon	12	5	1	6	14	18	16
Nea Salamina	12	4	4	4	13	15	16
ENP	12	4	3	5	9	9	15
Alki	12	4	1	7	15	22	13
Ethnikos	12	3	3	6	8	11	12
Aris	12	2	5	5	10	14	11
Olympiakos	12	2	4	6	11	19	10
Anagennisi	12	1	4	7	10	20	7
Ermis	12	1	3	8	4	17	6

26-round regular season (13x2); top 4 will form championship group, 5th to 8th will form "placement" group, 9th to 12th will form relegation group (from which the bottom team will go down), 13th & 14th will be relegated automatically

CZECH REPUBLIC

Nov 18: Jablonec 2 Olomouc 0.
Nov 19: Dukla 0 Teplice 0; Slovacko 1 Liberec 2; Plzen 3 Mlada Boleslav 2.
Nov 20: Ceske Budejovice 1 Zizkov 0; Hradec Kralove 1 Slavia 1; Ostrava 0 Pribram 2.
Nov 21: Bohemians 1905 0 Sparta 4.
Nov 25: Sparta 0 Dukla 0.
Nov 26: Liberec 2 Jablonec 2.
Nov 27: Zizkov 0 Slovacko 1; Teplice 2 Bohemians 1905 0; Mlada Boleslav 3 Ceske Budejovice 1; Pribram 2 Plzen 1; Olomouc 0 Hradec Kralove 2.
Nov 28: Slavia 0 Ostrava 0.
Dec 2: Plzen 4 Bohemians 1905 1.
Dec 3: Ostrava 0 Olomouc 0; Slavia 1 Liberec 3; Jablonec 2 Sparta 4.
Dec 4: Zizkov 1 Pribram 2; Ceske Budejovice 3 Dukla 2; Hradec Kralove 3 Teplice 2.
Dec 5: Slovacko 1 Mlada Boleslav 0.

CZECH REPUBLIC

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sparta	16	13	1	2	33	12	40
Liberec	16	10	4	2	38	19	34
Plzen	16	9	3	4	38	22	30
M Boleslav	16	8	4	4	27	17	28
Jablonec	16	8	3	5	38	18	27
Pribram	16	9	0	7	28	28	27
Teplice	16	7	3	6	18	19	24
Slovacko	16	7	2	7	16	18	23
Dukla	16	5	5	6	20	20	20
Slavia	16	5	5	6	15	20	20
H Kralove	16	5	4	7	13	20	19
Boh'ians 1905	16	5	4	7	12	27	19
C Budejovice	16	3	4	9	17	32	13
Ostrava	16	2	4	10	12	27	10
Olomouc*	16	3	7	6	15	20	7
Zizkov	16	2	1	13	10	31	7

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated
**9pts deducted for match-fixing*

DENMARK

Nov 19: Horsens 0 OB 1.
Nov 20: Brondby 2 Copenhagen 1; Lyngby 2 HB Koge 2; Nordsjaelland 2 SonderjyskE 0; Midtjylland 1 AaB 3.
Nov 21: AGF 0 Silkeborg 2.
Nov 26: OB 2 Midtjylland 3.
Nov 27: Silkeborg 1 Nordsjaelland 2; SonderjyskE 3 Lyngby 1; Copenhagen 2 HB Koge 1; AaB 0 AGF 2.
Nov 28: Brondby 0 Horsens 1.
Dec 3: Silkeborg 4 AaB 2.
Dec 4: Nordsjaelland 0 Midtjylland 0; HB Koge 1 Brondby 1; Lyngby 1 Horsens 2; Copenhagen 0 AGF 0.
Dec 5: SonderjyskE 0 OB 4.

DENMARK

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Copenhagen	18	12	3	3	31	16	39
Nordsjaelland	18	11	2	5	25	13	35
Midtjylland	18	9	3	6	27	26	30
Horsens	18	8	5	5	30	22	29
AGF	18	7	8	3	24	16	29
Silkeborg	18	7	5	6	28	25	26
AaB	18	7	5	6	27	25	26
OB	18	7	4	7	32	30	25
SonderjyskE	18	5	6	7	21	28	21
Brondby	18	4	6	8	20	23	18
Lyngby	18	3	3	12	17	33	12
HB Koge	18	1	4	13	16	41	7

33-round season (11x3); bottom 2 will be relegated

ENGLAND

Saturday, November 19

Everton 2 (Jagielka 44, Baines pen 83)
Wolverhampton 1 (Hunt pen 37) Att: 33,953

Manchester City 3 (Balotelli pen 41, Richards 44, Aguero pen 72)
Newcastle 1 (Gosling 89) Att: 47,408

Norwich 1 (Morison 16)
Arsenal 2 (Van Persie 26, 59) Att: 26,801

Stoke 2 (Walters 8, Shawcross 64)
Queens Park Rangers 3 (Helguson 22, 54, Young 44) Att: 27,618

Sunderland 0
Fulham 0 Att: 37,688

Swansea 0
Manchester United 1 (Hernandez 11) Att: 20,295

West Bromwich 2 (Thomas 16, Long 56)
Bolton 1 (Klasnic pen 21) Att: 26,221

Wigan 3 (Jordi Gomez 6, Caldwell 31, Crusat 88)
Blackburn 3 (Yakubu 2, pen 90+9, Hoilett 59)
Att: 17,392

Sunday, November 20

Chelsea 1 (Sturridge 55)
Liverpool 2 (Rodriguez 33, Johnson 87)
Att: 41,820

Monday, November 21

Tottenham 2 (Adebayor 14, 40)
Aston Villa 0 Att: 35,818

Saturday, November 26

Arsenal 1 (Vermaelen 82)
Fulham 1 (Vermaelen og 65) Att: 60,043

Bolton 0
Everton 2 (Fellaini 49, Vellios 78) Att: 24,058

Chelsea 3 (Terry 7, Sturridge 29, Mata 45)
Wolverhampton 0 Att: 41,648

Manchester United 1 (Hernandez 49)
Newcastle 1 (Ba pen 64) Att: 75,594

Norwich 2 (Martin 15, Holt 73)
Queens Park Rangers 1 (Young 59) Att: 26,781

Stoke 3 (Delap 28, Whelan 58, Crouch 72)
Blackburn 1 (Rochina 86) Att: 26,686

Sunderland 1 (Larsson 8)
Wigan 2 (Jordi Gomez pen 44, Di Santo 90+3)
Att: 37,883

West Bromwich 1 (Mulumbu 10)
Tottenham 3 (Adebayor 25, 90+3, Defoe 81)
Att: 24,801

Sunday, November 27

Liverpool 1 (Lescott og 33)
Manchester City 1 (Kompany 31) Att: 45,071

Swansea 0
Aston Villa 0 Att: 20,404

Storemags

GREECE

Cash woe for AEK

Although they still have two games in hand, Panathinaikos slipped from top spot in the Super League when they suffered a 3-1 defeat – their first domestic reverse of the season – away to lowly Aris Salonika.

AEK took their place with a 1-0 win against Kerkyra, but they are facing a backlash from players whose wages are said to be several months in arrears.

In a statement on the official website, players say the club "is on the brink, and we have reached the limit of our tolerance".

HOLLAND

Leaders hammered

League leaders AZ suffered a crushing 5-1 defeat at Heerenveen but remained top of the Eredivisie after second-place PSV lost 2-0 to Feyenoord.

On a day of 20 goals in five Eredivisie games, Twente moved to within a point of PSV with a 6-2 win at Utrecht in a match that was suspended for 15 minutes midway through the second half after fireworks were let off in the away

Dutch duel...PSV's Wilfred Bouma (left) and Otman Bakkal of Feyenoord

Saturday, December 3

Aston Villa 0
Manchester United 1 (Jones 20) Att: 40,053

Blackburn 4 (Yakubu 20, 45+2, 57, pen 82)
Swansea 2 (Lita 35, Moore 66) Att: 23,080

Manchester City 5 (Aguero 32, Nasri 51, Y Toure 68, Balotelli 88, Johnson 90+1)
Norwich 1 (Morison 81) Att: 47,201

Newcastle 0
Chelsea 3 (Drogba 38, Kalou 89, Sturridge 90+2) Att: 52,305

Queens Park Rangers 1 (Helguson 20)
West Bromwich 1 (Long 81) Att: 17,290

Tottenham 3 (Bale 7, Lennon 50, Defoe 60)
Bolton 0 Att: 35,896

Wigan 0
Arsenal 4 (Arteta 28, Vermaelen 29, Gervinho 61, Van Persie 78) Att: 19,280

Sunday, December 4

Everton 0
Stoke 1 (Huth 15) Att: 33,219

Wolverhampton 2 (Fletcher 73, 81)
Sunderland 1 (Richardson 52) Att: 25,145

Monday, December 5

Fulham 1 (Dempsey 85)
Liverpool 0 Att: 25,688

ENGLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man City	14	12	2	0	48	13	38
Man United	14	10	3	1	31	13	33
Tottenham	13	10	1	2	29	16	31
Chelsea	14	9	1	4	31	17	28
Arsenal	14	8	2	4	30	23	26
Newcastle	14	7	5	2	19	15	26
Liverpool	14	6	5	3	17	13	23
Stoke	14	5	3	6	14	23	18
Aston Villa	14	3	7	4	16	18	16
Everton	13	5	1	7	15	17	16
Norwich	14	4	4	6	20	26	16
QPR	14	4	4	6	15	25	16
Fulham	14	3	6	5	16	16	15
West Brom	14	4	3	7	13	21	15
Swansea	14	3	5	6	14	20	14
Wolves	14	4	2	8	15	24	14
Sunderland	14	2	5	7	16	17	11
Blackburn	14	2	4	8	21	32	10
Bolton	14	3	0	11	19	34	9
Wigan	14	2	3	9	12	28	9

38-round season (19x2); bottom 3 will be relegated

Leading scorers

14 Robin Van Persie (Arsenal)
11 Sergio Aguero (Manchester City)
10 Edin Dzeko (Manchester City)
9 Yakubu Aiyegbeni (Blackburn)
9 Demba Ba (Newcastle)
9 Wayne Rooney (Manchester United)

ESTONIA

ESTONIA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Flora (C)	36	26	8	2	100	24	86
Kalju	36	24	7	5	82	23	79
Trans	36	22	7	7	107	29	73
Levadia	36	21	10	5	76	25	73
Sillamae	36	17	3	16	77	59	54
Paide	36	13	6	17	40	51	45
Tammeka	36	11	6	19	57	75	39
Viljandi	36	8	6	22	37	69	30
Kuressaare*	36	7	5	24	28	68	26
Ajax (R)	36	0	4	32	11	192	4

**Kuressaare stay in top flight after beating Infonet 5-1 on agg in the rel/prom play-off*

FRANCE

Friday, November 18

Lyon 1 (Ederson 36)
Rennes 2 (Pitroipa 39, Kembo 53) Att: 34,123

Toulouse 0
Lille 0 Att: 17,653

Saturday, November 19

Ajaccio 2 (Ilan pen 52, Andre 90+1)
Caen 2 (Wague 64, Nangis 71) Att: 5,225

Dijon 2 (Jovial 70, Corgnet 73)
Bordeaux 0 Att: 13,568

Evian 2 (Sagbo pen 2, Wass 59)
Lorient 1 (Sunu 47) Att: 10,763

Montpellier 1 (Diawara og 62)
Marseille 0 Att: 26,241

Nice 0
Saint-Etienne 2 (Sinama-Pongolle pen 24, Zouma 39) Att: 8,599

Sunday, November 20

Brest 2 (Grougi pen 68, Poyet 80)
Sochaux 0 Att: 12,918

Paris Saint-Germain 0
Nancy 1 (Calve 49) Att: 40,199

Valenciennes 2 (Isimat-Mirin 59, Samassa 79)
Auxerre 1 (Traore 34) Att: 13,383

Saturday, November 26

Bordeaux 2 (Gouffran 59, Modeste 79)
Caen 0 Att: 17,265

Lille 2 (Payet 11, Sow 88)
Brest 0 Att: 16,780

Nancy 1 (Bakar 26)
Dijon 2 (Bautheac pen 18, Sankhare 83) Att: 15,114

Rennes 3 (Feret 10, pen 87, Hadji 77)
Evian 2 (Barbosa 19, Wass 32) Att: 17,789

Saint-Etienne 3 (Gradel 7, Sinama-Pongolle 33, Nicolita 84)
Ajaccio 1 (Diawara 60) Att: 20,059

Sochaux 1 (Camara 84)
Montpellier 3 (Giroud 49, 86, 88) Att: 11,941

Toulouse 2 (Machado 25, Devaux 63)
Valenciennes 0 Att: 29,234

Sunday, November 27

Auxerre 0
Lyon 3 (Lopez 20, 68, Michel Bastos 88) Att: 11,924

Lorient 1 (Mvuemba pen 62)
Nice 0 Att: 16,009

Marseille 3 (Remy 9, Amalfitano 65, A Ayew 83)
Paris Saint-Germain 0 Att: 41,512

Friday, December 2

Caen 1 (Frau pen 23)
Marseille 2 (A Ayew 21, J Ayew 52) Att: 20,470

Saturday, December 3

Ajaccio 2 (Chedjou og 2, Ilan 37)
Lille 3 (Obraniak 12, Basa 16, Hazard pen 80) Att: 6,500

Brest 2 (Roux 23, 27)
Saint-Etienne 2 (Aubameyang 24, 87) Att: 13,789

Dijon 0
Sochaux 0 Att: 13,165

Evian 2 (Sorlin 25, Barbosa 33)
Valenciennes 1 (Danic pen 85) Att: 9,608

Montpellier 4 (Dernis 26, Giroud 47, Utaka 62, Cabella 86)
Lorient 0 Att: 12,866

Nice 2 (Monzon pen 15, Civelli 35)
Rennes 0 Att: 7,664

Sunday, December 4

Bordeaux 2 (Plasil 1, Henrique 52)
Nancy 0 Att: 15,404

Lyon 3 (Kone 38, Ederson 52, Lopez pen 66)
Toulouse 2 (Umut 68, Sissoko pen 75) Att: 31,028

Paris Saint-Germain 3 (Jallet 52, Menez 76, Nene pen 81)
Auxerre 2 (Oliech 59, Dudka 87) Att: 42,035

FRANCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Montpellier	16	11	3	2	36	17	36
PSG	16	10	3	3	29	17	33
Lille	16	8	7	1	27	15	31
Lyon	16	9	2	5	28	19	29
Rennes	16	8	4	4	27	21	28
Toulouse	16	7	5	4	17	15	26
Marseille	16	6	6	4	22	16	24
Saint-Etienne	16	6	6	4	19	19	24
Lorient	16	6	5	5	17	18	23
Caen	16	5	4	7	23	25	19
Evian	16	4	7	5	21	23	19
Bordeaux	16	4	7	5	19	21	19
Sochaux	16	4	6	6	21	30	18
Dijon	16	5	3	8	17	29	18
Brest	16	2	10	4	17	18	16
Auxerre	16	3	6	7	22	26	15
Valenciennes	16	3	5	8	16	19	14
Nice	16	3	5	8	14	17	14
Nancy	16	3	5	8	12	20	14
Ajaccio	16	1	5	10	15	34	8

38-round season (19x2); bottom 3 will be relegated

Leading scorers

12 Olivier Giroud (Montpellier)
8 Kevin Gameiro (Paris Saint-Germain)
7 Bafetimbi Gomis (Lyon)
7 Nene (Paris Saint-Germain)
7 Loic Remy (Marseille)
7 Alain Traore (Auxerre)

GERMANY

Friday, November 18

Kaiserslautern 0
Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Ballack 54, Sam 70) Att: 42,245

Saturday, November 19

Bayern Munich 0
Borussia Dortmund 1 (Gotze 65) Att: 69,000

Freiburg 2 (Reisinger 61, 90+5)
Hertha 2 (Ramos 20, Niemeyer 45+1) Att: 21,500

Monchengladbach 5 (Herrmann 16, Reus 23, 38, 51, Arango 53)
Werder Bremen 0 Att: 53,465

Schalke 4 (Huntelaar 13, 66, Raul 39, Holtby 84)
Nuremberg 0 Att: 61,673

Wolfsburg 4 (Salihamidzic 22, 36, Chris 56, Madlung 74)
Hanover 1 (Schulz 43) Att: 30,000

Sunday, November 20

Hamburg 2 (Guerrero 25, Jansen 65)
1899 Hoffenheim 0 Att: 46,237

Stuttgart 2 (Harnik 41, 51)
Augsburg 1 (Werner 47) Att: 60,000

Friday, November 25

Cologne 0
Monchengladbach 3 (Hanke 20, 47, Arango 30) Att: 50,000

Saturday, November 26

Augsburg 2 (Brinkmann 65, Kapllani 90+4)
Wolfsburg 0 Att: 29,110

Borussia Dortmund 2 (Lewandowski 16, Felipe Santana 61)
Schalke 0 Att: 80,720

Hanover 1 (Schlaudraff 79)
Hamburg 1 (Bruma 64) Att: 49,000

Hertha 3 (Lasogga 7, 82, Toprak og 17)
Bayer Leverkusen 3 (Derdiyok 24, 64, 79) Att: 44,541

1899 Hoffenheim 1 (Roberto Firmino 24)
Freiburg 1 (Dembele 90) Att: 28,250

Nuremberg 1 (Chandler 13)
Kaiserslautern 0 Att: 37,266

Sunday, November 27

Mainz 3 (Ivanschitz 11, Caligiuri 65, Bungert 74)
Bayern Munich 2 (Van Buyten 56, 79) Att: 34,000

Werder Bremen 2 (Hunt 57, Naldo 67)
Stuttgart 0 Att: 40,800

Friday, December 2

Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Derdiyok 10, Sam 79)
1899 Hoffenheim 0 Att: 25,948

Saturday, December 3

Bayern Munich 4 (Ribery 22, 77, Robben pen 69, pen 83)
Werder Bremen 1 (Rosenberg 52) Att: 69,000

Freiburg 1 (Cisse 67)
Hanover 1 (Bastians og 44) Att: 20,000

First of three...Roma's Juan (centre) sees red away to Fiorentina

ITALY

Three off for Roma

Roma had three players sent off as they lost 3-0 at Fiorentina.

Juan was the first to go for pulling down Stevan Jovetic and conceding the penalty from which the hosts opened the scoring. After Alessandro Gamberini had made it two, Fernando Gago picked up his second yellow card of the game and Roma's woes were compounded when Bojan Krkic was shown a straight red for handball in the area five minutes from time, allowing Santiago Silva to score La Viola's second penalty of the game.

Raffaele Rubino's goal in Novara's 2-1 win over Parma meant he became the first player to score in four different divisions of the Italian league for the same club, having managed 16 in Serie C2, 56 in Serie C1 and six in Serie B.

KAZAKHSTAN

Maiden cup success

Mukhtar Mukhtarov scored the only goal of the game as Ordabasy Shymkent won the Kazakh Cup for the first time in their history, beating Tobol Kostanay 1-0

CLUB FOOTBALL

Kaiserslautern 1 (Hubnik og 5)
Hertha 1 (Raffael 14) Att: 36,856

Monchengladbach 1 (Hanke 72)
Borussia Dortmund 1 (Lewandowski 40) Att: 54,047

Stuttgart 2 (Gentner 29, 36)
Cologne 2 (Podolski pen 15, 88) Att: 56,255

Wolfsburg 2 (Mandzukic 10, Kirchhoff og 41)
Mainz 2 (Ivanschitz pen 70, Choupo-Moting 81) Att: 24,321

Sunday, December 4
Hamburg 2 (Guerrero 23, Jansen 62)
Nuremberg 0 Att: 45,473

Schalke 3 (Huntelaar 16, Fuchs 66, Raul 84)
Augsburg 1 (Molders 47) Att: 58,641

GERMANY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bayern	15	10	1	4	38	9	31
Dortmund	15	9	3	3	30	10	30
M'gladbach	15	9	3	3	24	10	30
Schalke	15	9	1	5	31	21	28
Werder	15	8	2	5	26	25	26
Leverkusen	15	7	4	4	22	19	25
Stuttgart	15	6	4	5	22	17	22
Hanover	15	5	6	4	19	23	21
Hertha	15	4	7	4	22	23	19
Hoffenheim	15	5	3	7	16	18	18
Hamburg	15	4	5	6	20	26	17
Cologne	14	5	2	7	22	31	17
Wolfsburg	15	5	2	8	21	30	17
Mainz	14	4	4	6	21	27	16
Nuremberg	15	4	3	8	14	26	15
Kaiserslautern	15	3	5	7	11	19	14
Freiburg	15	3	4	8	20	31	13
Augsburg	15	2	5	8	13	27	11

34-round season (17x2); bottom 2 will be relegated, 3rd bottom will enter rel/prom play-off

Leading scorers
13 Mario Gomez (Bayern Munich)
13 Klaas-Jan Huntelaar (Schalke)
11 Claudio Pizarro (Werder Bremen)
11 Lukas Podolski (Cologne)
10 Robert Lewandowski (Borussia Dortmund)
10 Marco Reus (Monchengladbach)

GREECE

Nov 19: Kerkyra 2 Ergotelis 1; AEK 2 Asteras 0; Olympiakos 1 Panathinaikos 1.
Nov 20: Atromitos 1 Levadiakos 1; Doxa 0 Panionios 0; OFI 0 Aris 1; Giannina 0 Xanthi 2; PAOK 3 Panetolikos 0.
Nov 23: AEK 2 Levadiakos 1.
Nov 26: Ergotelis 2 Giannina 1; PAOK 0 Kerkyra 0; Panetolikos 0 AEK 2.
Nov 27: Levadiakos 1 Doxa 0; Panathinaikos 3 OFI 1; Panionios 2 Aris 1; Asteras 2 Olympiakos 0; Xanthi 3 Atromitos 0.
Nov 30: Olympiakos 6 Doxa 0.
Dec 3: OFI 3 Asteras 0; Atromitos 1 Ergotelis 0; Olympiakos 2 Panetolikos 0.
Dec 4: AEK 1 Kerkyra 0; Doxa 0 Xanthi 2; Giannina 2 PAOK 2; Levadiakos 0 Panionios 0; Aris 3 Panathinaikos 1.

GREECE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
AEK	12	8	1	3	20	14	25
Olympiakos	11	7	3	1	25	12	24
Panathinaikos	10	7	2	1	24	12	23
Atromitos	11	5	5	1	12	10	20
Xanthi	12	5	2	5	18	14	17
PAOK	12	4	4	4	15	12	16
OFI	10	4	3	3	15	12	15
Panionios	12	3	4	5	11	14	13
Ergotelis	12	3	3	6	12	17	12
Panetolikos	10	3	2	5	9	14	11
Giannina	10	2	4	4	11	14	10
Aris	10	2	4	4	9	12	10
Asteras	10	2	3	5	5	12	9
Kerkyra	10	1	3	6	7	15	6
Levadiakos	4	1	2	1	3	3	5
Doxa	4	0	1	3	0	9	1

30-round season (15x2); teams placed 2nd to 5th will enter play-offs to determine Greece's 2nd Champions League representatives; bottom 3 will be relegated

HOLLAND

Nov 19: De Graafschap 1 PSV 3; NEC 1 Roda JC 2; Heerenveen 1 RKC 1; Heracles 1 Twente 1; Ajax 2 NAC 2.
Nov 20: Den Haag 2 Utrecht 2; Vitesse 0 Feyenoord 4; Groningen 2 VVV 1.
Nov 25: AZ 2 Utrecht 0.
Nov 26: NAC 2 Heerenveen 2; VVV 1 De Graafschap 2; Roda JC 3 Heracles 1; PSV 6 Groningen 1.
Nov 27: RKC 1 Feyenoord 2; Excelsior 1 Den Haag 1; NEC 0 Ajax 3; Twente 0 Vitesse 0.
Dec 2: Heracles 7 VVV 0.
Dec 3: Groningen 3 NEC 3; Den Haag 3 NAC 0; De Graafschap 1 Roda JC 2; Ajax 4 Excelsior 1.
Dec 4: Feyenoord 2 PSV 0; Vitesse 4 RKC 0; Utrecht 2 Twente 6; Heerenveen 5 AZ 1.

HOLLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
AZ	14	11	1	2	31	13	34
PSV	15	9	4	2	42	16	31
Twente	15	8	6	1	39	15	30
Ajax	15	7	6	2	41	23	27
Feyenoord	15	8	3	4	29	18	27
Heerenveen	15	6	7	2	33	23	25
Vitesse	15	7	4	4	22	16	25
Groningen	15	6	4	5	28	28	22
Roda JC	15	7	0	8	22	36	21
Heracles	15	5	5	5	27	22	20
NAC	15	5	3	7	22	26	18
Den Haag	15	5	3	7	20	27	18
Utrecht	15	4	4	7	26	32	16
RKC	15	4	3	8	14	26	15
NEC	15	4	2	9	15	25	14
De Graafschap	15	3	3	9	15	32	12
Excelsior	14	1	4	9	9	29	7
VVV	15	1	4	10	14	40	7

34-round season (17x2); bottom team will be relegated, 2nd & 3rd bottom will enter rel/prom play-offs

ISRAEL

Regular season
Nov 19: Bnei Yehuda 0 Kiryat Shmona 1; Acre 3 Maccabi Tel Aviv 0; Hapoel Petah Tikva 0 Ashdod 1; Netanya 6 Rishon LeZion 2; Hapoel Haifa 1 Bnei Sakhnin 2; Be'er Sheva 0 Maccabi Petah Tikva 0.
Nov 20: Hapoel Tel Aviv 0 Ramat HaSharon 0.
Nov 21: Beitar 1 Maccabi Haifa 4.
Nov 26: Kiryat Shmona 1 Beitar 0; Ashdod 2 Be'er Sheva 0; Rishon LeZion 0 Hapoel Petah Tikva 0; Bnei Sakhnin 1 Netanya 1; Ramat HaSharon 2 Hapoel Haifa 0; Maccabi Haifa 1 Acre 0.
Nov 27: Maccabi Tel Aviv 1 Hapoel Tel Aviv 3.
Nov 28: Maccabi Petah Tikva 1 Bnei Yehuda 0.
Dec 3: Acre 1 Kiryat Shmona 2; Ashdod 2 Rishon LeZion 1; Hapoel Petah Tikva 1 Bnei Sakhnin 2; Netanya 0 Ramat HaSharon 2; Be'er Sheva 3 Bnei Yehuda 1; Beitar 0 Maccabi Petah Tikva 0.
Dec 4: Hapoel Haifa 2 Maccabi Tel Aviv 0.
Dec 5: Hapoel Tel Aviv 3 Maccabi Haifa 0.

ISRAEL – REGULAR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
H Tel Aviv	14	9	3	2	29	7	30
Kiryat Shmona	14	8	5	1	18	8	29
Ashdod	14	8	3	3	20	14	27
R HaSharon	14	7	2	5	18	19	23
M Haifa	14	6	4	4	26	18	22
Bnei Sakhnin*	14	7	3	4	24	16	22
Netanya	14	6	4	4	23	20	22
Acre	14	6	3	5	22	16	21
M Tel Aviv	14	6	2	6	20	17	20
M Petah Tikva	14	4	5	5	15	21	17
Bnei Yehuda	14	4	4	6	11	14	16
Beitar	14	4	3	7	10	18	15
Rishon LeZion	14	2	5	7	15	31	11
H Haifa	14	2	4	8	11	20	10
Be'er Sheva	14	2	2	10	12	27	8
H Petah Tikva**	14	2	6	6	11	19	3

30-round regular season (15x2); top 8 will form championship group, bottom 8 will form relegation group (from which 3 will go down)
**2pts deducted for contract irregularities*
***9pts deducted for going into administration*

ITALY

Saturday, November 19
Fiorentina 0
Milan 0 Att: 23,000

Internazionale 2 (Thiago Motta 54, Coutinho 60)
Cagliari 1 (Larrivey 88) Att: 56,000

Napoli 0
Lazio 0 Att: 48,000

Sunday, November 20
Bologna 0
Cesena 1 (Parolo 84) Att: 20,397

Catania 1 (Almiron 78)
Chievo 2 (Pellissier pen 45+1, Sammarco 73) Att: 14,248

Genoa 1 (Miguel Veloso 87)
Novara 0 Att: 20,336

Juventus 3 (Pepe 20, Matri 48, Marchisio 65)
Palermo 0 Att: 36,489

Parma 2 (Biabiany 57, Giovinco pen 76)
Udinese 0 Att: 14,128

Roma 2 (Pjanic 25, Gago 54)
Lecce 1 (Bertolacci 61) Att: 30,768

Siena 2 (D'Agostino pen 44, Gazzi 86)
Atalanta 2 (Denis pen 15, 53) Att: 9,429

Friday, November 25
Udinese 2 (Di Natale 79, Isla 89)
Roma 0 Att: 17,000

Saturday, November 26
Atalanta 1 (Denis 64)
Napoli 1 (Cavani 90+4) Att: 17,827

Lazio 0
Juventus 1 (Pepe 35) Att: 29,000

Lecce 0
Catania 1 (Barrientos 90) Att: 5,962

Novara 2 (Rubino 70, Rigoni 78)
Parma 1 (Centurioni og 29) Att: 8,964

Sunday, November 27
Cagliari 1 (Conti pen 81)
Bologna 1 (Di Vaio 75) Att: 15,000

Cesena 2 (Mutu pen 70, 80)
Genoa 0 Att: 15,977

Milan 4 (Thiago Silva 8, Ibrahimovic 16, pen 44, Alexandre Pato 33)
Chievo 0 Att: 40,891

Palermo 2 (Miccoli 22, Ilicic 73)
Fiorentina 0 Att: 19,536

Siena 0
Internazionale 1 (Castaignos 89) Att: 13,587

Tuesday, November 29
Napoli 3 (Hamsik 23, Pandev 40, 68)
Juventus 3 (Matri 48, Estigarribia 72, Pepe 79) Att: 57,402

Friday, December 2
Genoa 0
Milan 2 (Ibrahimovic pen 56, Nocerino 79) Att: 23,000

Saturday, December 3
Internazionale 0
Udinese 1 (Isla 73) Att: 56,000

Napoli 4 (Lavezzi 26, Cavani 33, 82, Dzemaili 41)
Lecce 2 (Muriel 54, Corvia 90+3) Att: 49,000

Sunday, December 4
Bologna 1 (Di Vaio 28)
Siena 0 Att: 18,316

Catania 0
Cagliari 1 (Ibarbo 64) Att: 14,818

Chievo 0
Atalanta 0 Att: 8,000

Fiorentina 3 (Jovetic pen 17, Gamberini 44, Silva pen 86)
Roma 0 Att: 21,863

Juventus 2 (Marchisio 72, Vidal pen 82)
Cesena 0 Att: 38,217

Parma 0
Palermo 0 Att: 11,793

Monday, December 5
Lazio 3 (Biava 16, Rocchi 23, 72)
Novara 0 Att: 30,000

Storemag

Cup Final winner...Mukhtarov

in the Final. In the league, Sunkar and Okzhetpes will replace relegated Kairat Almaty and Vostok Oskemen in the top flight next season.

LATVIA

Coach does the double in debut campaign

Sergei Podpali added the league title to the Latvian Cup he won in May to finish his first season as coach of Ventpils as a double winner.

His side clinched the championship title with a 0-0 draw against reigning champions Skonto on the final day of the season, forcing the 48-year-old Russian to admit: "When I took the reigns at Ventspils in early 2011 many of my friends wondered why I was going to Latvia.

"Now they congratulate me for winning a title and feel a bit envious because we're going to play in the UEFA Champions League."

MACEDONIA

Three in three

Filip Ivanovski of Vardar scored a hat-trick in just three minutes as his side beat Napredok 5-1.

Vardar are unbeaten and top of the table.

Double...victorious Ventpils

ITALY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Juventus	13	8	5	0	24	10	29
Milan	13	8	3	2	29	14	27
Udinese	13	8	3	2	16	6	27
Lazio	13	7	4	2	19	9	25
Napoli	13	5	5	3	21	13	20
Palermo	13	6	2	5	16	15	20
Cagliari	13	4	5	4	12	13	17
Roma	13	5	2	6	15	17	17
Catania	13	4	5	4	14	19	17
Fiorentina	13	4	4	5	13	11	16
Parma	13	5	1	7	15	20	16
Chievo	13	4	4	5	10	16	16
Atalanta*	13	5	6	2	16	15	15
Genoa	12	4	3	5	14	16	15
Siena	13	3	5	5	14	12	14
Inter	12	4	2	6	14	18	14
Bologna	13	4	2	7	11	18	14
Novara	13	2	4	7	14	24	10
Cesena	13	2	3	8	6	15	9
Lecce	13	2	2	9	11	23	8

38-round season (19x2); bottom 3 will go down

**6pts deducted because of involvement in match-fixing scandal*

Leading scorers

10 German Denis (Atalanta)
9 Antonio Di Natale (Udinese)
8 Zlatan Ibrahimovic (Milan)
7 Edinson Cavani (Napoli)
7 Sebastian Giovinco (Parma)

LATVIA

LATVIA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ventspils (C)	32	22	5	5	75	19	71
Metalurgs	32	22	4	6	72	26	70
Daugava	32	19	6	7	58	30	63
Skonto	32	17	9	6	62	21	60
FC Jurmala	32	12	8	12	46	43	44
Jelgava	32	13	4	15	47	54	43
Gulbene	32	7	7	18	39	67	28
FK Jurmala	32	5	6	21	35	76	21
Olimps/RFS (R)*	32	1	3	28	19	117	6

**Olimps/RFS were relegated after losing to Spartaks, 4-1 on agg, in the rel/prom play-off*

MOLDOVA

MOLDOVA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sheriff	17	13	4	0	39	11	43
Dacia	17	13	2	2	37	10	41
Zimbru	17	7	7	3	23	11	28
Iskra-Stal	17	7	4	6	28	29	25
Milsami	17	7	3	7	23	20	24
Nistru	17	4	7	6	16	19	19
Tiraspol	17	4	6	7	14	14	18
Olimpia	17	3	8	6	9	16	17
S Gheorghe	17	4	5	8	15	32	17
Academia	17	2	9	6	16	26	15
CSCA-Rapid	17	2	7	8	10	24	13
Costuleni	17	1	8	8	9	27	11

Standings on Dec 6

33-round season (11x3); bottom 2 will be relegated

NORWAY

Nov 20: Stromsgodset 2 Valerenga 1; Fredrikstad 3 Aalesund 1; Tromso 3 Rosenborg 1; Brann 2 Lillestrom 0; Odd Grenland 1 Sogndal 0; Molde 3 Sarpsborg 1; Viking 1 Start 1; Stabaek 1 Haugesund 2.
Nov 27: Sogndal 2 Molde 1; Rosenborg 3 Viking 2; Aalesund 3 Brann 1; Haugesund 5 Stromsgodset 1; Start 1 Tromso 6; Lillestrom 0 Fredrikstad 0; Sarpsborg 3 Odd Grenland 2; Valerenga 2 Stabaek 0.

NORWAY – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Molde (C)	30	17	7	6	54	38	58
Tromso	30	15	8	7	56	34	53
Rosenborg	30	14	7	9	69	44	49
Brann	30	14	6	10	51	49	48
Odd Grenland	30	14	6	10	44	44	48
Haugesund	30	14	5	11	55	43	47
Valerenga	30	14	5	11	42	33	47
Stromsgodset	30	12	9	9	44	43	45
Aalesund	30	12	7	11	36	38	43
Stabaek	30	11	6	13	44	50	39
Viking	30	9	10	11	33	40	37
Fredrikstad	30	10	6	14	38	41	36
Lillestrom	30	9	7	14	46	52	34
Sogndal	30	8	10	12	24	31	34
Start (R)	30	7	5	18	39	61	26
Sarpsborg (R)	30	5	6	19	31	65	21

POLAND

Nov 18: Zaglebie 1 Polonia 0; Jagiellonia 0 Slask 2.
Nov 19: GKS 3 LKS 0; Ruch 2 Cracovia 0; Legia 3 Lechia 0.
Nov 20: Widzew 0 Korona 0; Wisla 0 Gornik 1.
Nov 21: Podbeskidzie 0 Lech 0.
Nov 23: Legia 3 Zaglebie 0.
Nov 25: Polonia 2 Podbeskidzie 1; Slask 0 Wisla 1.
Nov 26: LKS 1 Jagiellonia 1; Gornik 4 Zaglebie 1; Korona 1 Legia 0.
Nov 27: Cracovia 2 GKS 1; Lech 0 Widzew 1.
Nov 28: Lechia 1 Ruch 0.
Dec 2: GKS 1 Ruch 1; Lechia 1 Polonia 3.
Dec 3: Korona 0 Cracovia 0; Jagiellonia 0 Podbeskidzie 2; Lech 4 LKS 0.
Dec 4: Gornik 0 Slask 2; Wisla 1 Widzew 0.
Dec 5: Zaglebie 0 Legia 4.

POLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Slask	16	11	1	4	29	12	34
Legia	16	10	2	4	29	10	32
Polonia	16	8	4	4	18	15	28
Wisla	16	8	3	5	16	12	27
Ruch	16	8	2	6	22	17	26
Lech	16	7	4	5	26	10	25
Korona	16	6	7	3	17	15	25
Widzew	16	5	7	4	12	12	22
Gornik	16	5	5	6	18	19	20
Podbeskidzie	16	5	5	6	14	19	20
Jagiellonia	16	5	4	7	19	27	19
Lechia	16	4	5	7	8	14	17
GKS	16	4	4	8	20	19	16
LKS	16	4	3	9	11	32	15
Cracovia	16	3	4	9	9	19	13
Zaglebie	16	3	4	9	13	29	13

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated

PORTUGAL

Nov 25: Academica 0 Beira Mar 1.
Nov 26: Nacional 2 Maritimo 2; Benfica 1 Sporting 0.
Nov 27: Feirense 2 Rio Ave 0; Gil Vicente 2 Uniao Leiria 1; Porto 3 Braga 2; Pacos Ferreira 1 Olhanense 1.
Nov 28: Guimaraes 3 Setubal 0.

PORTUGAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Porto	11	8	3	0	28	7	27
Benfica	11	8	3	0	24	10	27
Sporting	11	7	2	2	24	11	23
Maritimo	11	6	4	1	18	13	22
Braga	11	5	4	2	15	7	19
Olhanense	11	3	5	3	11	11	14
Gil Vicente	11	3	5	3	12	17	14
Guimaraes	11	4	1	6	17	14	13
Beira Mar	11	3	4	4	7	6	13
Academica	11	4	1	6	14	16	13
Setubal	11	3	2	6	7	17	11
Nacional	11	3	2	6	8	22	11
Feirense	11	2	4	5	8	17	10
Uniao Leiria	11	3	0	8	12	21	9
Rio Ave	11	2	2	7	9	14	8
P Ferreira	11	2	2	7	11	22	8

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated

ROMANIA

Nov 18: Petrolul 0 Tirgu-Mures 1; Otelul 1 Sportul 0.
Nov 19: Brasov 4 Mioveni 0; Dinamo 1 Vointa 0; CFR 3 Universitatea 1.
Nov 20: Vaslui 3 Pandurii 2; Ceahlaul 1 Steaua 0.
Nov 21: Rapid 5 Gaz Metan 3; Concordia 0 Astra 1.
Nov 25: Astra 0 Ceahlaul 0.
Nov 26: Sportul 1 Vaslui 0; Pandurii 3 Rapid 0; Steaua 1 Brasov 0.
Nov 27: Vointa 0 CFR 1; Universitatea 1 Otelul 1; Mioveni 0 Dinamo 1.
Nov 28: Tirgu-Mures 3 Concordia 0; Gaz Metan 0 Petrolul 1.
Dec 2: CFR 3 Mioveni 0.
Dec 3: Vointa 0 Universitatea 0; Brasov 2 Astra 0; Petrolul 0 Pandurii 0.
Dec 4: Ceahlaul 1 Tirgu-Mures 1; Concordia 0 Gaz Metan 0; Vaslui 1 Otelul 0; Rapid 2 Sportul 0.
Dec 5: Dinamo 1 Steaua 3.

ROMANIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo	16	11	3	2	31	10	36
CFR	16	11	2	3	35	13	35
Rapid	16	10	4	2	27	13	34
Steaua	16	8	4	4	22	13	28
Vaslui	16	8	3	5	25	14	27
Universitatea	16	7	6	3	22	15	27
Pandurii	16	7	5	4	23	15	26
Otelul	16	7	4	5	14	14	25
Astra	16	6	6	4	17	16	24
Ceahlaul	16	5	6	5	14	19	21
Brasov	16	5	3	8	17	16	18
Petrolul	16	4	5	7	14	19	17
Gaz Metan	16	5	2	9	22	29	17
Tirgu-Mures	16	3	6	7	17	24	15
Vointa	16	3	5	8	10	20	14
Sportul	16	2	6	8	14	28	12
Concordia	16	2	4	10	8	25	10
Mioveni	16	2	2	12	9	38	8

34-round season (17x2); bottom 4 will be relegated

RUSSIA

Division split after 30-round regular season; teams carried forward full points and goals record

Championship group

Nov 18: Zenit 0 Anzhi 0; CSKA 1 Rubin 2.
Nov 20: Dynamo 2 Kuban 1; Spartak Moscow 2 Lokomotiv 0.
Nov 26: Kuban 1 Spartak Moscow 1; Rubin 2 Dynamo 0.
Nov 27: Zenit 2 Lokomotiv 1; Anzhi 2 CSKA 1.

RUSSIA – CHAMPIONSHIP GROUP

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zenit	32	18	11	3	61	26	65
CSKA	32	16	11	5	60	33	59
Dynamo	32	17	7	8	53	33	58
Spartak M	32	16	9	7	51	34	57
Rubin	32	15	10	7	44	28	55
Lokomotiv	32	15	8	9	50	34	53
Anzhi	32	14	10	8	40	33	52
Kuban	32	14	8	10	40	30	50

14-round campaign (7x2)

Relegation group

Nov 19: Volga 1 Amkar 2; Terek 0 Krylia Sovetov 0; Krasnodar 3 Spartak Nalchik 2.
Nov 20: Rostov 3 Tom 1.
Nov 26: Spartak Nalchik 3 Terek 0; Krylia Sovetov 1 Volga 0.
Nov 27: Tom 0 Krasnodar 0; Rostov 1 Amkar 1.

RUSSIA – RELEGATION GROUP

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Krasnodar	32	11	9	12	41	45	42
Rostov	32	9	9	14	35	47	36
Terek	32	8	8	16	29	48	32
Amkar	32	7	10	15	23	41	31
Krylia Sovetov	32	7	10	15	22	43	31
Volga	32	8	4	20	25	43	28
Spartak N	32	6	9	17	28	43	27
Tom	32	4	9	19	20	61	21

14-round campaign (7x2); bottom 2 will be relegated, 3rd & 4th bottom will enter rel/prom play-offs

SCOTLAND

Regular season

Nov 19: Inverness 0 Celtic 2; Aberdeen 1 Motherwell 2; Dundee United 1 Hearts 0; Hibernian 1 Kilmarnock 1; Rangers 0 St Johnstone 0; St Mirren 2 Dunfermline 1.
Nov 23: Celtic 2 Dunfermline 1.
Nov 26: Celtic 5 St Mirren 0; Dunfermline 3 Aberdeen 3; Hearts 2 Inverness 1; Motherwell 0 Dundee United 0; St Johnstone 3 Hibernian 1.
Nov 27: Kilmarnock 1 Rangers 0.
Dec 3: Hearts 1 St Johnstone 2; Kilmarnock 2 Aberdeen 0; Rangers 2 Dunfermline 1; St Mirren 1 Inverness 2.
Dec 4: Dundee United 0 Celtic 1.

SCOTLAND – REGULAR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rangers	17	13	3	1	32	8	42
Celtic	17	12	2	3	35	14	38
Motherwell	16	9	3	4	20	18	30
St Johnstone	16	7	5	4	20	13	26
Hearts	17	6	4	7	16	13	22
Kilmarnock	17	5	7	5	23	25	22
St Mirren	17	5	5	7	15	21	20
Dundee Utd	17	4	6	7	21	27	18
Inverness	17	4	3	10	22	33	15
Hibernian	16	3	5	8	16	26	14
Dunfermline	17	3	5	9	20	36	14
Aberdeen	16	3	4	9	17	23	13

33-round regular season (11x3); top 6 will form championship group, bottom 6 will form relegation group (from which the bottom team will go down)

SERBIA

Nov 19: Sloboda Sevojno 4 Metalac 1; OFK 1 Radnicki 3; Jagodina 1 Red Star 3; Spartak 1 Javor 0; Partizan 5 Borac 1; Vojvodina 2 Smederevo 0.
Nov 20: Hajduk 1 Novi Pazar 0; Rad 1 BSK 1.
Nov 26: Javor 2 Hajduk 1; BSK 0 Vojvodina 4; Metalac 0 OFK 1; Novi Pazar 4 Sloboda Sevojno 0; Red Star 0 Partizan 2.

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RUSSIA

Ahead at the break

Defending champions Zenit went into the winter break top of the table following a 2-1 win over Lokomotiv. They are six points clear of CSKA Moscow, who were beaten 2-1 by Anzhi Makhachkala, with Cameroon striker Samuel Eto'o scoring the winning goal in the final minute.

SCOTLAND

Gers go down at Killie

Rangers lost in the league for the first time this season, a 1-0 defeat at Kilmarnock ending their run of 14 consecutive SPL away wins .

SERBIA

Belgrade derby

Partizan opened up a seven-point advantage at the top of the table, winning 2-0 at Belgrade rivals and nearest challengers Red Star.

SPAIN

Atletico's new home

Atletico Madrid have unveiled plans for a new 70,000-capacity stadium to replace the existing Vicente Calderon as their home from 2015.

Rivals...Partizan (left) v Red Star

ARGENTINA

Yet more trouble

Estudiantes' home game against Banfield was abandoned after just 13 minutes when supporters threw missiles onto the pitch shortly after a goal by the visitors' Hernan Rodrigo Lopez.

The referee, Fernando Echenique, called the game off after Banfield goalkeeper

Nov 27: Smederevo 1 Spartak 1; Borac 0 Rad 0; Radnicki 0 Jagodina 0.
Dec 3: OFK 3 Novi Pazar 0; Jagodina 0 Metalac 2; Partizan 3 Radnicki 0; Vojvodina 3 Borac 1; Spartak 1 BSK 0; Javor 0 Smederevo 1.
Dec 4: Hajduk 1 Sloboda Sevojno 2; Rad 1 Red Star 2.

SERBIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Partizan	14	13	0	1	33	5	39
Red Star	14	10	2	2	27	10	32
Vojvodina	14	7	6	1	28	9	27
Radnicki	14	6	7	1	20	12	25
S Sevojno	14	7	4	3	20	17	25
Spartak	14	5	7	2	13	12	22
Jagodina	14	5	4	5	14	13	19
OFK	14	6	1	7	17	19	19
Hajduk	14	5	3	6	13	18	18
Rad	14	3	5	6	15	12	14
Smederevo	14	4	2	8	9	17	14
Javor	14	4	2	8	8	16	14
BSK	14	3	4	7	8	19	13
Novi Pazar	14	2	4	8	9	24	10
Borac	14	1	5	8	6	20	8
Metalac	14	1	4	9	8	25	7

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated

SLOVAKIA

Nov 9: Kosice 1 Ruzomberok 1; Slovan 3 Dukla 2; Tatran 0 Zlate Moravce 1; DAC 0 Nitra 2.
Nov 19: Nitra 1 Kosice 1; Ruzomberok 1 Tatran 1; Dukla 1 Senica 1; Spartak 1 Zilina 1; DAC 2 Trencin 0.
Nov 20: Zlate Moravce 1 Slovan 1.
Nov 23: Trencin 3 Zilina 3; Senica 1 Spartak 1.
Nov 26: Trencin 4 Spartak 2; Senica 1 Zlate Moravce 0; Tatran 1 Nitra 1; Kosice 3 DAC 0; Zilina 3 Dukla 1; Slovan 2 Ruzomberok 0

SLOVAKIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zilina	18	9	6	3	29	19	33
Slovan	18	9	5	4	26	20	32
Spartak	18	9	5	4	22	17	32
Senica	18	8	7	3	25	14	31
Zlate Moravce	18	8	6	4	20	16	30
Ruzomberok	18	7	7	4	25	16	28
Nitra	18	4	10	4	18	17	22
Dukla	18	6	3	9	24	26	21
Trencin	18	4	7	7	21	26	19
Kosice	18	4	6	8	19	26	18
Tatran	18	2	6	10	9	23	12
DAC	18	4	0	14	11	29	12

33-round season (11x3); bottom team will be relegated

SLOVENIA

SLOVENIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Maribor	21	15	4	2	48	22	49
Gorica	21	10	4	7	34	24	34
Olimpija	21	9	7	5	32	26	34
Mura	21	9	5	7	25	26	32
Rudar	21	8	6	7	36	29	30
Koper	21	7	6	8	28	26	27
Celje	21	7	4	10	27	32	25
Domzale	21	7	4	10	25	34	25
Nafta	21	5	6	10	25	33	21
Triglav	21	3	4	14	8	36	13

Standings on Dec 6

36-round season (9x4); bottom team will be relegated, 2nd bottom will enter rel/prom play-off

SPAIN

Saturday, November 19

Barcelona 4 (Pique 18, Messi 43, Puyol 54, Villa 75)
Zaragoza 0 Att: 80,000

Valencia 2 (Soldado 75, 82)
Real Madrid 3 (Benzema 20, Sergio Ramos 72, Cristiano Ronaldo 78) Att: 45,000

Villarreal 1 (Borja Valero 21)
Betis 0 Att: 18,000

Sunday, November 20

Atletico Madrid 3 (Pizzi 67, Adrian 73, Diego 83)
Levante 2 (Xavi Torres 72, Ruben 90+2)
Att: 27,000

Osasuna 0
Rayo Vallecano 0 Att: 15,270

Real Sociedad 0
Espanyol 0 Att: 21,000

Sevilla 1 (Jesus Navas 14)
Athletic Bilbao 2 (Iraola 6, De Marcos 70)
Att: 30,000

Sporting Gijon 2 (Trejo 45+5, Novo 88)
Getafe 1 (Fedor 35) Att: 22,000

Monday, November 21

Racing Santander 1 (Arana 69)
Malaga 3 (Isco 48, Alvaro og 64, Fernandez 88)
Att: 8,000

Saturday, November 26

Getafe 1 (Valera 66)
Barcelona 0 Att: 13,000

Rayo Vallecano 1 (Tamudo 83)
Valencia 2 (Jonas 21, Tino Costa 55) Att: 10,100

Real Madrid 4 (Cristiano Ronaldo pen 23, pen 81, Di Maria 48, Higuain 64)
Atletico Madrid 1 (Adrian 14) Att: 80,000

Sunday, November 27

Athletic Bilbao 0
Granada 1 (Inigo Lopez 30) Att: 37,000

Betis 2 (Jonathan Pereira 81, 84)
Real Sociedad 3 (Agirretxe 56, Vela 76, Inigo Martinez 90) Att: 37,000

Espanyol 1 (Alvaro 55)
Osasuna 2 (Lamah 44, Nekounam 50) Att: 24,052

Levante 4 (Barkero 20, Juanlu 47, Kone 52, 62)
Sporting Gijon 0 Att: 11,287

Mallorca 2 (Torrejon og 45+1, Victor 58)
Racing Santander 1 (Nahuelpan 73) Att: 11,672

Zaragoza 0
Sevilla 1 (Negredo pen 23) Att: 22,000

Monday, November 28

Malaga 2 (Toulalan 5, Isco 40)
Villarreal 1 (Marco Ruben 15) Att: 27,500

Tuesday, November 29

Barcelona 4 (Sanchez 28, 40, Villa 42, Messi 50)
Rayo Vallecano 0 Att: 53,775

Saturday, December 3

Barcelona 5 (Fabregas 4, 33, Cuenca 37, Messi 55, Sanchez 61)
Levante 0 Att: 79,361

Racing Santander 1 (Stuani 27)
Villarreal 0 Att: 13,000

Sporting Gijon 0
Real Madrid 3 (Di Maria 33, Cristiano Ronaldo 63, Marcelo 90+1) Att: 23,500

Valencia 2 (Tino Costa pen 6, Soldado 80)
Espanyol 1 (Moreno 69) Att: 40,000

Sunday, December 4

Atletico Madrid 3 (Gabi 25, Falcao 74, Salvio 90+1)
Rayo Vallecano 1 (Gabi og 90+3) Att: 45,000

Granada 1 (Ighalo 45)
Zaragoza 0 Att: 22,000

Mallorca 1 (Alvaro 2)
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Amorebieta 45+3) Att: 12,863

Osasuna 2 (Flano 39, Nekounam 90+3)
Betis 1 (Castro 80) Att: 15,701

Real Sociedad 3 (Demichelis og 10, Vela 89, Ifran 90+1)
Malaga 2 (Rondon 20, Fernandez 59) Att: 24,500

Monday, December 5

Sevilla 3 (Fazio 32, Manu 49, Kanoute 90+1)
Getafe 0 Att: 38,000

SPAIN	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Real Madrid	14	12	1	1	49	10	37
Barcelona	15	10	4	1	47	7	34
Valencia	14	9	3	2	23	14	30
Levante	14	8	2	4	23	17	26
Sevilla	14	6	6	2	16	10	24
Malaga	14	7	2	5	19	19	23
Osasuna	14	5	6	3	18	26	21
Atletico	14	5	4	5	21	21	19
Athletic	14	4	6	4	20	17	18
Espanyol	14	5	2	7	11	17	17
Vallecano	15	4	4	7	16	22	16
Granada	13	4	3	6	6	12	15
Sociedad	14	4	3	7	15	22	15
Mallorca	13	3	5	5	11	18	14
Villarreal	14	3	5	6	11	20	14
Getafe	14	3	4	7	14	22	13
Betis	14	4	1	9	13	21	13
Santander	14	2	6	6	10	20	12
Gijon	14	3	3	8	12	24	12
Zaragoza	14	2	4	8	12	28	10

38-round season (19x2); bottom 3 will be relegated

Leading scorers

17 Cristiano Ronaldo (Real Madrid)
17 Lionel Messi (Barcelona)
12 Gonzalo Higuain (Real Madrid)
9 Roberto Soldado (Valencia)
8 Radamel Falcao (Atletico Madrid)
7 Karim Benzema (Real Madrid)
7 Cesc Fabregas (Barcelona)

SWITZERLAND

Oct 2: Grasshopper 3 Zurich 0 (awarded).
Nov 19: Basle 1 Young Boys 0; Thun 3 Servette 0.
Nov 20: Lucerne 2 Grasshopper 1; Sion 2 Xamax 0; Zurich 4 Lausanne 1.
Dec 3: Basle 1 Lucerne 0; Lausanne 1 Xamax 3.
Dec 4: Grasshopper 1 Thun 0; Servette 0 Zurich 1; Young Boys 1 Sion 1.

SWITZERLAND	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Basle	17	11	4	2	37	16	37
Lucerne	17	9	4	4	24	13	31
Sion	17	9	3	5	25	16	30
Young Boys	17	7	5	5	25	16	26
Xamax	17	7	4	6	21	21	25
Thun	17	6	4	7	20	20	22
Servette	17	6	3	8	23	28	21
Zurich	17	6	2	9	25	25	20
Grasshopper	17	6	1	10	18	34	19
Lausanne	17	2	2	13	14	43	8

36-round season (9x4); bottom team will be relegated, 2nd bottom will enter rel/prom play-off

TURKEY

Regular season

Nov 18: Mersin 1 Trabzonspor 1.
Nov 19: Ankaragucu 2 Karabukspor 1; Kayserispor 1 Orduspor 0; Fenerbahce 1 Eskisehirspor 0.
Nov 20: Antalyaspor 2 Istanbul BB 1; Sivasspor 1 Genclerbirligi 1; Gaziantepspor 1 Manisaspor 1; Besiktas 0 Galatasaray 0.
Nov 21: Bursaspor 1 Samsunspor 0.
Nov 25: Genclerbirligi 0 Fenerbahce 0.
Nov 26: Samsunspor 1 Antalyaspor 0; Orduspor 0 Mersin 1; Galatasaray 2 Sivasspor 1.
Nov 27: Eskisehirspor 3 Ankaragucu 2; Istanbul BB 3 Gaziantepspor 1; Manisaspor 1 Kayserispor 0; Trabzonspor 0 Besiktas 1.
Nov 28: Karabukspor 3 Bursaspor 1.
Dec 2: Sivasspor 2 Trabzonspor 2.
Dec 3: Gaziantepspor 1 Samsunspor 0; Genclerbirligi 0 Galatasaray 1; Fenerbahce 4 Ankaragucu 2.
Dec 4: Antalyaspor 2 Karabukspor 1; Kayserispor 1 Istanbul BB 0; Mersin 0 Manisaspor 0; Bursaspor 0 Eskisehirspor 1.
Dec 5: Besiktas 2 Orduspor 1.

TURKEY – REGULAR	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fenerbahce	13	8	4	1	20	11	28
Galatasaray	13	7	4	2	18	10	25
Besiktas	13	7	3	3	18	14	24
Manisaspor	13	6	5	2	13	8	23
Istanbul BB	13	6	3	4	19	14	21
Trabzonspor	13	5	6	2	19	14	21
Eskisehirspor	13	6	2	5	16	15	20
Mersin	13	5	4	4	14	13	19
Orduspor	13	4	5	4	11	10	17
Bursaspor	13	4	4	5	16	14	16
Kayserispor	13	5	1	7	15	16	16
Genclerbirligi	13	4	4	5	15	18	16
Antalyaspor	13	4	4	5	12	15	16
Sivasspor	13	4	4	5	18	23	16
Gaziantepspor	13	3	4	6	12	15	13
Karabukspor	13	3	2	8	15	19	11
Samsunspor	13	2	5	6	9	16	11
Ankaragucu	13	1	2	10	15	30	5

34-round regular season (17x2); top 4 will form championship group, 5th to 8th will form Europa League place group, bottom 3 will be relegated

Cristian Lucchetti told him he had been left disorientated by two flares that landed near him.

CHILE

Final at last for *La U*

Having been three-times Libertadores Cup semi-finalists, Universidad de Chile reached their first continental Final, beating Brazil's Vasco da Gama 3-1 on aggregate in the semi-finals of the Sudamericana Cup. *La U* will now face 2009 winners LDU Quito of Ecuador, who beat Argentinian champions Velez Sarsfield, with Argentinian striker Hernan Barcos scoring all three LDU goals in a 3-0 aggregate victory.

Undefeated in the league, *La U* also drew 0-0 with Audax Italiano to finish top of the regular phase of the clausura.

Catolica beat Magallanes on penalties in the Chilean Cup Final.

Universidad star...Gustavo Canales

URUGUAY

Nacional's title

Former River Plate, Monaco and Argentina midfielder Marcelo Gallardo won the apertura in his first season as coach of Nacional as a goal from Alvaro Recoba gave them a 1-0 victory over Liverpool.

Gallardo took charge in the middle of the year after hanging up his boots as a Nacional player last season.

Recoba, who spent 11 years in Italy, mostly at Internazionale, joined Nacional this season from Danubio, who finished second after beating Bella Vista 4-1.

UKRAINE

Nov 18: Illichivets 0 Arsenal 0.
Nov 19: Tavriya 1 Volyn 0; Shakhtar 2 Metalurh 0; Dnipro 0 Kryvbas 2; Chornomorets 2 Karpaty 2.
Nov 20: Zorya 1 Metalist 5; Vorskla 0 Obolon 1; Dynamo 4 Oleksandria 0.
Nov 25: Metalurh 6 Vorskla 3; Metalist 2 Tavriya 0.
Nov 26: Obolon 0 Dynamo 1; Kryvbas 2 Illichivets 0; Volyn 1 Dnipro 2.
Nov 27: Oleksandria 1 Zorya 0; Karpaty 0 Shakhtar 5; Arsenal 0 Chornomorets 1.
Dec 2: Shakhtar 5 Arsenal 0.
Dec 3: Zorya 1 Obolon 2; Tavriya 4 Oleksandria 1; Chornomorets 1 Kryvbas 2.
Dec 4: Illichivets 3 Dnipro 2; Vorskla 1 Karpaty 1; Metalist 3 Volyn 1.
Dec 5: Dynamo 1 Metalurh 0.

UKRAINE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dynamo	19	15	4	0	40	8	49
Shakhtar	19	15	3	1	50	12	48
Metalist	19	13	5	1	35	15	44
Kryvbas	19	9	4	6	18	15	31
Dnipro	19	9	3	7	30	25	30
Arsenal	19	7	6	6	21	17	27
Tavriya	19	7	6	6	26	23	27
Metalurh	19	8	2	9	22	22	26
Vorskla	19	6	6	7	25	27	24
Chornomorets	19	5	6	8	17	24	21
Illichivets	19	5	5	9	19	30	20
Volyn	19	5	4	10	18	30	19
Karpaty	19	3	7	9	17	29	16
Oleksandria	19	3	5	11	16	36	14
Zorya	19	3	3	13	15	37	12
Obolon	19	2	5	12	9	28	11

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated

SOUTH AMERICA

LIBERTADORES CUP

Preliminary round draw

Arsenal (Arg) v Sport Huancayo (Per) (PR1)
Real Potosi (Bol) v Flamengo (Bra) (PR2)
Penarol (Uru) v Caracas (Ven) (PR3)
Ecuador 3rd reps v *Paraguay 3rd reps* (PR4)
Internacional (Bra) v *Colombia 3rd reps* (PR5)
Chile 3rd reps v Tigres (Mex) (PR6)
1st legs - Jan 25; 2nd legs - Feb 1

Group stage draw

Group 1
Santos (Bra)
Peru 1st reps
Bolivia 2nd reps
PR5 winners

Group 2
Paraguay 1st reps
Ecuador 2nd reps
Argentina 3rd reps
PR2 winners

Group 3
Bolivar (Bol)
Chile 2nd reps
Colombia 2nd reps
PR6 winners

Group 4
Boca Juniors (Arg)
Fluminense (Bra)
Zamora (Ven)
PR1 winners

Group 5
Nacional (Uru)
Vasco da Gama (Bra)
Peru 2nd reps
PR4 winners

Group 6
Corinthians (Bra)
Cruz Azul (Mex)
Deportivo Tachira (Ven)
Paraguay 2nd reps

Group 7
Defensor Sporting (Uru)
Guadalajara (Mex)
Velez Sarsfield (Arg)
Ecuador 1st reps

Group 8
Atletico Nacional (Col)
Universidad de Chile (Chl)
Argentina 4th reps
PR3 winners

Games to be played Feb 8-Apr 25

Top 2 in each group qualify for 1st knockout round

SUDAMERICANA CUP

Quarter-finals

1st legs - Nov 1-3; 2nd legs - Nov 9-17
Arsenal (Arg) v Universidad de Chile (Chl)
1-2, 0-3 (agg 1-5)
Independiente Santa Fe (Col) v Velez Sarsfield (Arg)
1-1, 2-3 (agg 3-4)
LDU Quito (Ecu) v Libertad (Par)
1-0, 0-1 (agg 1-1, LDU Quito 5-4 on pens)
Universitario (Per) v Vasco da Gama (Bra)
2-0, 2-5 (agg 4-5)

Semi-finals

1st legs - Nov 23/24; 2nd legs - Nov 29/30
LDU Quito v Velez Sarsfield
2-0, 1-0 (agg 3-0)
Vasco da Gama v Universidad de Chile
1-1, 0-2 (agg 1-3)

ARGENTINA

Apertura

Nov 12: San Lorenzo 0 All Boys 1.
Nov 18: San Martin 0 All Boys 0; Newell's 0 Tigre 1.
Nov 19: Argentinos 1 Godoy Cruz 0; Belgrano 1 Velez 3; Independiente 3 Olimpo 0.
Nov 20: San Lorenzo 0 Union 1; Boca 0 Racing 0; Colon 1 Rafaela 0.
Nov 21: Lanus 0 Arsenal 1.
Nov 25: Tigre 3 Rafaela 0.
Nov 26: All Boys 0 Lanus 0; Newell's 0 San Lorenzo 0; Olimpo 0 San Martin 3; Racing 2 Belgrano 3.
Nov 27: Arsenal 1 Estudiantes 2; Velez 1 Colon 1; Godoy Cruz 1 Boca 2; Banfield 2 Argentinos 2.
Nov 28: Union 0 Independiente 0.
Dec 2: Estudiantes 3 All Boys 0; Argentinos 2 Arsenal 1.
Dec 3: San Martin 2 Union 0; Rafaela 2 Velez 0; Lanus 0 Olimpo 0; Colon 0 Racing 2.
Dec 4: Independiente 1 Newell's 1; Boca 3 Banfield 0; Belgrano 1 Godoy Cruz 1.
Dec 5: San Lorenzo 1 Tigre 0.

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ARGENTINA – APERTURA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Boca (C)	17	11	6	0	22	4	39
Racing	17	6	10	1	15	7	28
Tigre	17	7	6	4	20	14	27
Rafaela	17	8	2	7	22	23	26
Lanus	17	6	7	4	17	12	25
Belgrano	17	6	7	4	18	16	25
Velez	17	7	4	6	18	16	25
Colon	17	6	7	4	14	14	25
Union	17	6	7	4	14	15	25
Arsenal	17	6	5	6	19	17	23
San Martin	17	5	7	5	16	14	22
Godoy Cruz	17	5	6	6	26	23	21
Independiente	17	5	6	6	15	16	21
San Lorenzo	17	5	4	8	13	17	19
Argentinos	17	4	7	6	17	23	19
All Boys	17	3	9	5	14	22	18
Estudiantes	16	4	4	8	20	23	16
Olimpo	17	2	9	6	15	24	15
Newell's	17	1	11	5	11	16	14
Banfield	16	3	2	11	11	21	11

19-round tournament (19x1); no relegation after apertura

BOLIVIA

BOLIVIA – APERTURA: GROUP A – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bolivar	12	5	4	3	22	12	19
Universitario	12	5	4	3	17	14	19
Guabira	12	6	1	5	16	23	19
San Jose	12	5	3	4	10	7	18
Potosi	12	4	5	3	20	11	17
Blooming	12	2	4	6	11	22	10

BOLIVIA – APERTURA: GROUP B – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Aurora	12	8	0	4	23	13	24
Oriente	12	7	2	3	26	18	23
Nacional	12	4	4	4	23	15	16
The Strongest	12	4	3	5	34	23	15
La Paz	12	4	2	6	16	29	14
Mamore	12	2	0	10	10	41	6

Top 4 in both groups enter championship play-offs; no relegation after apertura

BRAZIL

Nov 12: Figueirense 2 At Mineiro 1; Fluminense 1 America 2; Sao Paulo 2 Avai 0.
Nov 13: Gremio 2 Palmeiras 2; Coritiba 2 Flamengo 0; Ceara 2 Santos 3; Corinthians 2 Paranaense 1; Goianiense 0 Bahia 1; Cruzeiro 1 Internacional 0; Vasco 2 Botafogo 0.
Nov 16: Paranaense 1 Sao Paulo 0; Internacional 1 Bahia 0; Fluminense 5 Gremio 4; America 2 Botafogo 1; Ceara 0 Corinthians 1; Avai 0 Cruzeiro 0; Palmeiras 1 Vasco 1.
Nov 17: Santos 1 Goianiense 1; At Mineiro 2 Coritiba 1; Flamengo 0 Figueirense 0.
Nov 19: Sao Paulo 3 America 1; Vasco 2 Avai 0; Gremio 1 Ceara 3.
Nov 20: Botafogo 1 Internacional 2; Corinthians 2 At Mineiro 1; Cruzeiro 1 Paranaense 1; Goianiense 0 Flamengo 0; Bahia 0 Palmeiras 2; Coritiba 1 Santos 0; Figueirense 0 Fluminense 4.
Nov 27: Palmeiras 1 Sao Paulo 0; Santos 1 Bahia 1; Flamengo 1 Internacional 0; Fluminense 1 Vasco 2; Gremio 2 Goianiense 2; At Mineiro 4 Botafogo 0; Figueirense 0 Corinthians 1; Coritiba 1 Avai 0; America 2 Paranaense 1; Ceara 2 Cruzeiro 2.
Dec 4: Corinthians 0 Palmeiras 0; Sao Paulo 4 Santos 1; Internacional 1 Gremio 0; Cruzeiro 6 At Mineiro 1; Goianiense 5 America 1; Paranaense 1 Coritiba 0; Bahia 2 Ceara 1; Avai 1 Figueirense 1; Botafogo 1 Fluminense 1; Vasco 1 Flamengo 1.

BRAZIL – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Corinthians (C)	38	21	8	9	53	36	71
Vasco	38	19	12	7	57	40	69
Fluminense	38	20	3	15	60	51	63
Flamengo	38	15	16	7	59	47	61
Internacional	38	16	12	10	57	43	60
Sao Paulo	38	16	11	11	57	46	59
Figueirense	38	15	13	10	46	45	58
Coritiba	38	16	9	13	57	41	57
Botafogo	38	16	8	14	52	49	56
Santos	38	15	8	15	55	55	53
Palmeiras	38	11	17	10	43	39	50
Gremio	38	13	9	16	49	57	48
Goianiense	38	12	12	14	50	45	48
Bahia	38	11	13	14	43	49	46
At Mineiro	38	13	6	19	50	60	45
Cruzeiro	38	11	10	17	48	51	43
Paranaense (R)	38	10	11	17	38	55	41
Ceara (R)	38	10	9	19	47	64	39
America (R)	38	8	13	17	51	69	37
Avai (R)	38	7	10	21	45	75	31

CHILE

CHILE – CLAUSURA: REGULAR – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Univ Chile	17	11	6	0	39	15	39
Cobreloa	17	9	4	4	27	17	31
Colo Colo	17	9	3	5	27	28	30
Audax Italiano	17	8	5	4	29	23	29
Univ Catolica	17	8	4	5	29	18	28
La Serena	17	8	4	5	26	23	28
La Calera	17	7	3	7	20	18	24
Espanola	17	6	5	6	31	23	23
Cobresal	17	6	5	6	22	29	23
Wanderers*	17	5	5	7	19	22	20
Iquique	17	5	5	7	30	41	20
Morning (R)	17	6	1	10	29	34	19
Nublense (R)	17	6	1	10	22	32	19
U Concepcion	17	4	7	6	20	21	19
Palestino	17	4	7	6	19	24	19
O'Higgins	17	4	5	8	23	26	17
Huachipato	17	4	5	8	25	30	17
San Felipe*	17	2	7	8	16	29	13

Top 8 enter championship play-offs; the 2 teams with fewest points in combined apertura/clausura table (Santiago Morning & Nublense) were relegated, *3rd & 4th fewest (Wanderers & San Felipe) entered rel/prom play-offs

COLOMBIA

COLOMBIA – CLAUSURA: REGULAR – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Junior	18	8	7	3	28	22	31
Itagui	18	8	6	4	24	18	30
Once Caldas	18	8	5	5	34	23	29
Millonarios	18	8	4	6	21	17	28
Ind Santa Fe	18	8	4	6	22	19	28
Envigado	18	8	4	6	20	18	28
Chico	18	6	9	3	19	16	27
America*	18	7	4	7	22	24	25
Quindio	18	7	4	7	23	26	25
Pereira (R)	18	5	9	4	23	16	24
Dep Cali	18	6	5	7	15	20	23
Nacional	18	5	7	6	24	23	22
Ind Medellin	18	6	4	8	26	28	22
Huila	18	6	4	8	20	22	22
Tolima	18	6	4	8	21	25	22
Cartagena	18	5	4	9	21	25	19
La Equidad	18	3	7	8	12	22	16
Cucuta	18	2	9	7	17	28	15

Top 8 enter championship play-offs; the team with fewest average points over the 3 most recent seasons (Pereira) were relegated, *the team with 2nd fewest (America) enter rel/prom play-off

USA

Beckham's treble

As a result of LA Galaxy's victory in the MLS Cup, David Beckham became only the second Englishman to win championships in three different countries (England, Spain and USA).

He follows in the footsteps of Trevor Steven, who won in England, Scotland and France.

Another league title...Beckham

TOGO

Six killed on away trip

Six people died and 25 were seriously injured when a bus carrying the Etoile Filante de Lome team was involved in an accident on their way to a league game against Semassi in Sodoke.

A burst tyre caused the driver to lose control of the vehicle, which rolled over before catching fire.

TUNISIA

Champions beaten

CAF Champions League winners Esperance suffered their first league defeat in almost a year when they went down 2-1 at CA Bizertin. Esperance led at half-time with a goal from Youssef Msakni, before Hassan Harbaoui and Nour Hadhria won it for the hosts.

Roar quietened...Sydney's Bruno Cazarine (right)

ECUADOR

ECUADOR – 2ND STAGE – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dep Quito	22	13	5	4	34	15	44
Barcelona	22	12	4	6	29	21	40
El Nacional	22	11	4	7	40	33	37
Emelec	22	10	4	8	34	23	34
LDU Quito	22	10	4	8	32	23	34
Cuenca	22	8	8	6	29	23	32
Independiente	22	9	4	9	32	30	31
Olmedo	22	7	6	9	22	28	27
Manta	22	7	4	11	18	30	25
Imbabura (R)	22	7	4	11	26	40	25
LDU Loja	22	7	3	12	31	42	24
Espoli (R)	22	4	4	14	16	35	16

Dep Quito enter overall championship play-off, against 1st stage winners Emelec; the 2 teams with fewest points in combined 1st/2nd stage table (Imbabura & Espoli) were relegated

PARAGUAY

PARAGUAY – CLAUSURA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olimpia	20	12	4	4	33	19	40
Libertad	19	11	5	3	34	16	38
Cerro Porteno	19	10	6	3	33	19	36
Nacional	20	10	2	8	28	24	32
Tacuary	20	7	8	5	29	25	29
Sol America	20	7	6	7	25	26	27
Independiente	20	6	8	6	25	24	26
Rubio Nu	19	6	6	7	22	25	24
Guarani	20	6	5	9	30	32	23
3 de Febrero	20	4	5	11	28	38	17
Caballero	19	5	2	12	24	43	17
Luqueno	20	3	5	12	17	37	14

Standings on Dec 6

22-round tournament (11x2); the 2 teams with the fewest average points over the 3 most recent seasons will be relegated

PERU

PERU – REGULAR – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Alianza Lima	30	17	7	6	45	22	58
Juan Aurich	30	15	11	4	46	21	56
Huancayo	30	15	5	10	49	33	50
San Martin	30	13	8	9	43	24	47
Leon	30	14	4	12	37	30	46
Inti Gas	30	12	8	10	42	41	44
Union	30	12	7	11	46	43	43
Cienciano	30	12	4	14	42	46	40
Cobresol	30	9	13	8	32	38	40
Cristal	30	10	8	12	30	34	38
Sport Boys	30	10	6	14	26	49	36
Melgar	30	9	7	14	37	44	34
Cesar Vallejo	30	9	7	14	32	42	34
Universitario	30	8	10	12	25	35	34
Al Atletico (R)	30	10	3	17	24	41	33
CNI (R)	30	8	6	16	32	45	30

Top 2 will meet in play-off games to decide the champions

URUGUAY

URUGUAY – APERTURA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nacional (C)	15	9	5	1	30	11	32
Danubio*	15	8	5	2	19	8	31
Penarol	15	9	3	3	30	12	30
River Plate	15	8	4	3	22	17	28
Cerro Largo	15	8	3	4	18	16	27
Defensor	15	7	3	5	23	16	24
Cerro	15	7	3	5	17	12	24
Liverpool	15	6	1	8	17	18	19
Tanque Sisley	15	5	3	7	15	23	18
Wanderers	15	5	2	8	23	25	17
Racing*	15	4	6	5	20	23	17
Rampla	15	5	1	9	16	22	16
Fenix	15	4	4	7	15	22	16
Rentistas	15	4	2	9	10	21	14
Cerrito	15	3	4	8	10	23	13
Bella Vista	15	3	1	11	9	25	10

No relegation after apertura

**Danubio were awarded 3pts and Racing had 1pt deducted after their 1-1 draw because Racing fielded an ineligible player; but the game is still credited as a draw in the table*

VENEZUELA

VENEZUELA – APERTURA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lara	15	10	5	0	31	9	35
Caracas	15	10	3	2	24	10	33
Petare	15	8	5	2	23	14	29
Anzoategui	15	8	3	4	15	10	27
Mineros	14	7	4	3	18	14	25
Yaracuyanos	15	6	5	4	21	13	23
Zulia	15	6	5	4	23	17	23
Esppor	15	5	5	5	18	16	20
Zamora	14	4	7	3	17	16	19
Monagas	15	5	3	7	17	19	18
Trujillanos	15	4	5	6	20	19	17
Tachira	15	4	5	6	12	17	17
El Vigia	15	4	4	7	15	22	16
Aragua	14	3	7	4	11	18	16
Tucanes	15	2	4	9	18	27	10
Estudiantes	15	1	7	7	12	33	10
Llaneros	15	1	6	8	12	25	9
Carabobo	14	1	5	8	13	21	8

Standings on Dec 6

17-round tournament: no relegaton after apertura

CONCACAF

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Quarter-finals draw

Isidro Metapan (ESv) v Pumas UNAM (Mex)
Monarcas Morelia (Mex) v Monterrey (Mex)
Seattle Sounders (USA) v Santos Laguna (Mex)
Toronto (Can) v Los Angeles Galaxy (USA)
1st legs - Mar 6-8; 2nd legs - Mar 13-15

MEXICO

Apertura

Quarter-finals

1st legs - Nov 19/20; 2nd legs - Nov 26/27
Jaguares v Santos 2-2, 1-2 (agg 3-4)
Morelia v Cruz Azul 2-1, 2-1 (agg 4-2)
Pachuca v Tigres 0-1, 0-3 (agg 0-4)
Queretaro v Guadalajara 2-1, 0-0 (agg 2-1)

Semi-finals

1st legs - Nov 30/Dec 1; 2nd legs - Dec 3/4
Morelia v Santos 2-1, 2-3 (agg 4-4, Santos go through on better regular season record)
Queretaro v Tigres 0-0, 0-1 (agg 0-1)

UNITED STATES

Championship final (MLS Cup)

Nov 20 - Carson (Home Depot Center)
Los Angeles 1 (Donovan 72)
Houston 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 30,281. **Ref:** Salazar

AFRICA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Final

1st leg

Nov 6
Wydad Casablanca (Mor) 0
Esperance (Tun) 0
Ref: Alioum (Cam)
Wydad: Lamyaghri - Rabeh, Lemsen, Amrani (Mankari 88), Berrabah, Ajeddou, Fettah, Lakhal (Kaddioui 77), Mssassi, Rami (Zidoune 64), Ondama.
Esperance: Ben Cherifia - Hicherl, Coulibaly, Chemmam, Yaya, Mouelhi, Traoui, Bouazzi (Afful 90), Korbi, Msakni (Darragi 83), Ndjeng (Slema 90+5).

2nd leg

Nov 12
Esperance 1 (Afful 22)
Wydad Casablanca 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Doue (IvC)
Esperance 1-0 on agg
Esperance: Ben Cherifia - Afful, Hicheri, Chemmam, Yaya, Traoui, Bouazzi, Korbi, Darragi (Mouelhi 84), Msakni (Coulibaly 76), Ndjeng (Ayari 88).
Wydad: Bounou - Rabeh, Lemsen, Amrani, Berrabah, Ajeddou, Fettah (Skouma 59), Lakhal (Kaddioui 70), Mssassi, Rami (Angan 89), Ondama.
Sent off: Lemsen 45+5min.

CONFEDERATION CUP

Final

1st leg

Nov 19
Club Africain (Tun) 1 (Mendomo 7)
Maghreb Fes (Mor) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 50,000
Club Africain: Ben Ayoub - Iffa, Yaacoubi, Ressaissi, Haddadi, Mendomo, Ziadi, Rguii, Dhaouadi, Moulhbi (Mechergui 66; Ben Akremi 84), Messaidi.
Maghreb Fes: Zniti - Zekroumi, Lmrani, Hajji, Hammoumi, Chtaibi (Diop 82), El Basri, Bamaamar, Dahmani, Halhoul, Bourrezouk. *Sent off: Zekroumi 60min.*

2nd leg

Dec 4
Maghreb Fes 1 (Tigana 45+3)
Club Africain 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Diatta (Sen)
Agg 1-1; Maghreb Fes 6-5 on pens
Maghreb Fes: Zniti - Hajji, El Basri, Mrani, Hammoumi (El Youssfi 90+1), Chtaibi, Dahmani, Diop, Tigana, Ayati (Halhoul 83), Bourrezouk.
Club Africain: Ben Ayoub - Ressaissi, Iffa, Yaacoubi, Meriah (Agrebi 28), Ziadi, Mendomo, Soltani (Mechergui 63), Dhaouadi, Mouihbi, Ndouassel. *Sent off: Ndouassel 60min.*

NIGERIA

NIGERIA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dolphins (C)	38	23	4	11	49	30	73
Sunshine Stars	38	22	5	11	55	35	71
Warri Wolves	38	19	9	10	44	29	66
Kano Pillars	38	20	5	13	46	31	65
Sharks	38	17	12	9	43	37	63
Enugu Rangers	38	19	5	14	47	30	62
Enyimba	38	19	4	15	44	28	61
Kaduna Utd	38	16	8	14	42	40	56
Kwara Utd	38	16	5	17	40	45	53
Lobi Stars	38	15	8	15	34	40	53
Heartland	38	16	4	18	39	35	52
Bukola Babes	38	15	6	17	35	37	51
Gombe Utd	38	14	8	16	34	37	50
N Tornadoes	38	13	11	14	35	43	50
Shooting Stars	38	13	8	17	34	39	47
Ocean Boys	38	13	8	17	37	44	47
Plateau Utd (R)	38	12	8	18	42	49	44
Zamfara Utd (R)	38	11	6	21	26	58	39
Crown (R)	38	11	4	23	34	48	37
JUTH (R)	38	8	8	22	26	51	32

SOUTH AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
SuperSport	13	8	4	1	24	9	28
Mamelodi S	13	7	4	2	25	11	25
Free State S	13	7	3	3	16	9	24
Kaizer Chiefs	13	7	3	3	14	9	24
Moroka Sw's	13	7	3	3	20	16	24
Orlando P'tes	13	6	3	4	14	10	21
Ajax	13	5	3	5	15	18	18
Wits Univ	13	4	5	4	17	15	17
AmaZulu	13	4	4	5	11	9	16
Bloemfontein	13	4	4	5	13	12	16
Maritzburg	13	3	6	4	11	18	15
Golden Arrows	13	4	2	7	16	22	14
Platinum Stars	13	3	3	7	13	16	12
Santos	13	3	2	8	12	22	11
Black Leopards	13	2	4	7	10	25	10
Jomo Cosmos	13	1	5	7	9	19	8

Standings on Dec 6

30-round season (15x2); bottom team will be relegated, 2nd bottom will enter rel/prom play-offs

ASIA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Preliminary round draw

East Asia zone

Pohang Steelers (SKo) v *Thailand reps (cup winners)*

West Asia zone

1st round
Esteghlal (Irn) v Zob Ahan (Irn)

2nd round
Al Shabab (UAE) v Neftchi (Uzb)
Esteghlal OR Zob Ahan v Al Ettifaq (Sau)

Group stage draw

Group A

Al Jazira (UAE)
Al Rayyan (Qat)
Nasaf (Uzb)
Al Ettifaq OR Esteghlal OR Zob Ahan

Group B

Al Arabi (Qat)
Al Ittihad (Sau)
Bani Yas (UAE)
Pakhtakor (Uzb)

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AUSTRALIA

Record run is over

Brisbane Roar's Australian record-breaking run of 36 matches unbeaten ended with a 2-0 loss at Sydney.

CHINA

Cup Final comeback

Tianjin Teda came from behind to beat Shandong Luneng 2-1 in the Cup Final with goals from Wang Xinxin and Yu Dabao.

SINGAPORE

Veteran wins again

At the age of 41, Bosnia-born Singapore international Aleksandr Duric won his sixth S.League title – with his third different club – as he helped Tampines Rovers to their first championship since 2005.

Winning goal...Yu Dabao

UAE

Keeper attacked

Baniyas goalkeeper Mohammad Ali Ghuloom was attacked by men wielding knives and swords after he tried to break up an argument at a cinema in Dubai. Around 20 men were said to have ambushed Ghuloom, who suffered hand, abdomen and head injuries.

Group C
Al Ahli (Sau)
Al Nasr (UAE)
Lekhwiya (Qat)
Sepahan (Irn)

Group D
Al Gharafa (Qat)
Al Hilal (Sau)
Persepolis (Irn)
Al Shabab OR Neftchi

Group E
Adelaide United (Aus)
Bunyodkor (Uzb)
Gamba Osaka (Jap)
Pohang Steelers OR Thai cup winners

Group F
Beijing Guoan (Chn)
Brisbane Roar (Aus)
Ulsan Hyundai (SKo)
Japan reps (Emperor's Cup winners)

Group G
Central Coast Mariners (Aus)
Nagoya Grampus (Jap)
Seongnam Ilhwa Chunma (SKo)
Tianjin Teda (Chn)

Group H
Guangzhou Evergrande (Chn)
Jeonbuk Motors (SKo)
Kashiwa Reysol (Jap)
Thailand reps (league champions)

Top 2 in each group qualify for 1st knockout round

AUSTRALIA

Regular season

Nov 11: Adelaide 2 Gold Coast 1.
Nov 12: Melbourne Heart 3 Newcastle 0; Central Coast 0 Melbourne Victory 0; Perth 0 Sydney 1.
Nov 13: Brisbane 1 Wellington 1.
Nov 18: Gold Coast 1 Melbourne Heart 2.
Nov 19: Wellington 1 Adelaide 1; Newcastle 1 Brisbane 2; Sydney 2 Central Coast 3.
Nov 20: Melbourne Victory 2 Perth 2.
Nov 25: Adelaide 0 Newcastle 0.
Nov 26: Central Coast 3 Melbourne Heart 1; Brisbane 4 Perth 0.
Nov 27: Wellington 2 Sydney 1; Melbourne Victory 3 Gold Coast 2.
Dec 2: Adelaide 0 Central Coast 4.
Dec 3: Newcastle 3 Melbourne Victory 1; Perth 2 Gold Coast 0.
Dec 4: Melbourne Heart 1 Wellington 0; Sydney 2 Brisbane 0.

AUSTRALIA – REGULAR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Brisbane	9	6	2	1	22	7	20
Central Coast	9	5	2	2	15	8	17
Sydney	9	4	2	3	12	11	14
Newcastle	9	4	1	4	11	13	13
Perth	9	4	1	4	9	12	13
Melbourne H	9	3	3	3	12	11	12
Melbourne V	9	2	5	2	10	11	11
Wellington	9	2	3	4	9	10	9
Adelaide	9	2	3	4	7	17	9
Gold Coast	9	1	2	6	11	18	5

27-round regular season (9x3); top 6 will enter championship play-offs; no relegation from this league

JAPAN

Nov 19: Sanfrecce 2 Kawasaki 3; Jubilo 2 Ventforet 1; Albirex 2 Gamba 2; Yokohama 1 Nagoya 2; Urawa 0 Vegalta 0; Omiya 1 Kashima 1; Montedio 0 Avispa 5.
Nov 20: Shimizu 1 Kashiwa 2; Cerezo 0 Vissel 3.
Nov 26: Gamba 1 Vegalta 0; Nagoya 3 Montedio 0; Kawasaki 3 Yokohama 0; Kashiwa 1 Cerezo 1; Kashima 3 Shimizu 0; Avispa 1 Urawa 2; Sanfrecce 4 Omiya 2.
Nov 27: Ventforet 3 Albirex 0; Vissel 3 Jubilo 1.
Dec 3: Jubilo 2 Kawasaki 1; Shimizu 1 Gamba 3; Albirex 0 Nagoya 1; Yokohama 1 Kashima 1; Omiya 3 Ventforet 1; Urawa 1 Kashiwa 3; Montedio 1 Sanfrecce 3; Vegalta 2 Vissel 0; Cerezo 7 Avispa 1.

JAPAN – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kashiwa (C)	34	23	3	8	65	42	72
Nagoya	34	21	8	5	67	36	71
Gamba	34	21	7	6	78	51	70
Vegalta	34	14	14	6	39	25	56
Yokohama	34	16	8	10	46	40	56
Kashima	34	13	11	10	53	40	50
Sanfrecce	34	14	8	12	52	49	50
Jubilo	34	13	8	13	53	45	47
Vissel	34	13	7	14	44	45	46
Shimizu	34	11	12	11	42	51	45
Kawasaki	34	13	5	16	52	53	44
Cerezo	34	11	10	13	67	53	43
Omiya	34	10	12	12	38	48	42
Albirex	34	10	9	15	38	46	39
Urawa	34	8	12	14	36	43	36
Ventforet (R)	34	9	6	19	42	63	33
Avispa (R)	34	6	4	24	34	75	22
Montedio (R)	34	5	6	23	23	64	21

SOUTH KOREA

Championship play-offs

Regular season champions Jeonbuk and runners-up Pohang qualified automatically for the Final and semi-final respectively

1st round
Nov 19: Seoul 1 Ulsan 3.
Nov 20: Suwon 1 Busan 0.

2nd round
Nov 23: Suwon 1 Ulsan 1 (Ulsan 3-1 on pens).

Semi-final
Nov 26: Pohang 0 Ulsan 1.

Final, 1st leg
Nov 30
Ulsan 1 (Kwak Tae-hwi 63)
Jeonbuk 2 (Eninho pen 52, 79)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 25,375. **Ref:** Lee

Final, 2nd leg
Dec 4
Jeonbuk 2 (Eninho pen 59, Luiz Henrique 69)
Ulsan 1 (Seol Ki-hyeon 56)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 33,554. **Ref:** Choi
Jeonbuk 4-2 on agg

UZBEKISTAN

UZBEKISTAN – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bunyodkor (C)	26	19	4	3	51	14	61
Nasaf	26	15	8	3	43	15	53
Pakhtakor	26	15	6	5	33	17	51
Neftchi	26	13	5	8	36	27	44
Mash'al	26	12	4	10	32	33	40
Navbahor	26	9	9	8	26	21	36
Shortan	26	9	5	12	29	41	32
Buxoro	26	8	7	11	23	38	31
Metalourg	26	9	4	13	35	42	31
Olmaliq	26	8	5	13	37	45	29
Dinamo	26	8	5	13	23	25	29
Andijan	26	7	7	12	29	43	28
Qizilqum (R)	26	6	6	14	23	40	24
Sogdiana (R)	26	4	5	17	32	51	17

OCEANIA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A
Nov 12: Mont-Dore (NC) 1 Tefana (Tah) 1.
Nov 20: Waitakere United (NZ) 4 Ba (Fij) 0.
Dec 3: Mont-Dore 0 Waitakere United 1; Tefana 4 Ba 1.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Waitakere	3	3	0	0	15	0	9
Tefana	3	1	1	1	5	12	4
Ba	3	1	0	2	3	9	3
Mont-Dore	3	0	1	2	2	4	1

Group B
Nov 19: Auckland City (NZ) 2 Hekari United (PNG) 0; Amicale (Van) 2 Koloale (Sol) 0.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Auckland	2	2	0	0	6	1	6
Amicale	2	1	1	0	3	1	4
Hekari Utd	2	0	1	1	1	3	1
Koloale	2	0	0	2	1	6	0

Remaining matchdays*
Feb 18/19, Mar 3/4, Mar 31
**plus Hekari v Koloale, Dec 10; Auckland v Amicale, Jan 18*

Group winners qualify for Final

NEW ZEALAND

NEW ZEALAND – REGULAR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Auckland	4	4	0	0	17	4	12
Waitakere	4	3	0	1	14	4	9
Canterbury	4	3	0	1	10	3	9
Otago	4	2	1	1	7	10	7
T Wellington	4	1	1	2	7	7	4
Hawkes Bay	4	1	1	2	5	7	4
YoungHeart	4	0	1	3	4	14	1
Waikato	4	0	0	4	2	17	0

Standings on Dec 6
14-round regular season; top 4 will enter championship play-offs

KEY TO TABLES
(C) = champions (R) = relegated

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THE GREAT TEAMS

Argentina 1986

With Diego Maradona at the heart of everything they did, *La Albiceleste* won their second World Cup in the heat and altitude of Mexico

Champions ...Argentina prepare to take on West Germany in the Final

In the 1986 World Cup finals in Mexico the talk was all about one man. Right from the start, when he created all three of his country's goals in their opening game against South Korea, through to the Final when, as Argentina's captain, he lifted the trophy after a 3-2 victory over West Germany in Mexico City's Azteca stadium, Diego Armando Maradona was the star of the show.

In the quarter-final against England Maradona scored arguably the most contentious World Cup goal of all time – his notorious "Hand of God" goal – and possibly the greatest, a brilliant run past five defenders. The 25-year-old also got two further memorable goals in the 2-0 semi-final win against Belgium.

The great irony of the 1986 World Cup-winning team was that it featured the game's greatest individual talent but was coached by one of the world's most pragmatic managers in Carlos Bilardo.

Bilardo was one of the first to switch to 3-5-2, and Argentina's five-man midfield – with wide players rather than wing-backs – gave them a base from which to support Maradona's brilliance.

In *World Soccer*'s August 1986 edition, Maradona dismissed talk of a one-man team. "We understood each other and the way we all wanted to play the game," he said. "It was Carlos Bilardo who put all our schemes into our heads so that we got to know what each player would do without even having to call." WS

THE COACH AND HIS TEAM

Carlos Bilardo
A qualified doctor who had been an influential midfielder for Estudiantes when they beat Manchester United in the 1968 World Club Cup Final, he replaced Cesar Luis Menotti as Argentina coach in 1983 and would clash repeatedly with his predecessor on tactical matters. He remained in charge until the 1990 World Cup Final. Later reunited with Maradona at Sevilla (1992-93), Boca Juniors (in 1996) and with the national team at the 2010 World Cup in a "general manager" role.

Doc...Bilardo

The formation
Bilardo opted for 3-5-2, with wide midfielders rather than full-backs, a system he had first used at Estudiantes. The system relied on seven outfield players whose role it was to defend, with three left for attacking, including Maradona, who was normally a second striker behind Valdano but had licence to roam. Brown was the sweeper behind the two stoppers, Ruggeri and Cuciuffo, while Batista sat in front of them but behind a midfield block of Giusti, Enrique and Olarticoechea. Burruchaga operated slightly further forward, supplying Maradona wherever possible.

THE FIRST XI

Nery Pumpido
Goalkeeper
Looked unsteady at times, but a regular, if unspectacular, shot-stopper.

Oscar Ruggeri
Defender
Commanding centre-back and stopper who was ever-present during the finals.

Jose Luis Brown
Defender
Sweeper who scored Argentina's first goal in the Final and played on despite a shoulder injury.

Jose Cuciuffo
Defender
Late addition who excelled after being called in for the second group game against Italy.

Sergio Batista
Midfielder
Ball-winner who sat in front of the back three. Argentina's coach from July 2010 to July 2011.

Ricardo Giusti
Midfielder
Industrious grafter who occupied the right-hand flank.

Hector Enrique
Midfielder
Hard worker who came in for the quarter-final against England and kept his place.

Julio Olarticoechea
Midfielder
Left-sided player who replaced suspended left-back Oscar Garre against England.

Jorge Burruchaga
Midfielder
France-based, he was outstanding as the link between midfield and attack.

Diego Maradona
Forward
The undisputed star of the tournament who confirmed his status as the world's best player.

Jorge Valdano
Forward
Brilliant foil for Maradona who scored four goals in the tournament, including the second in the Final.

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